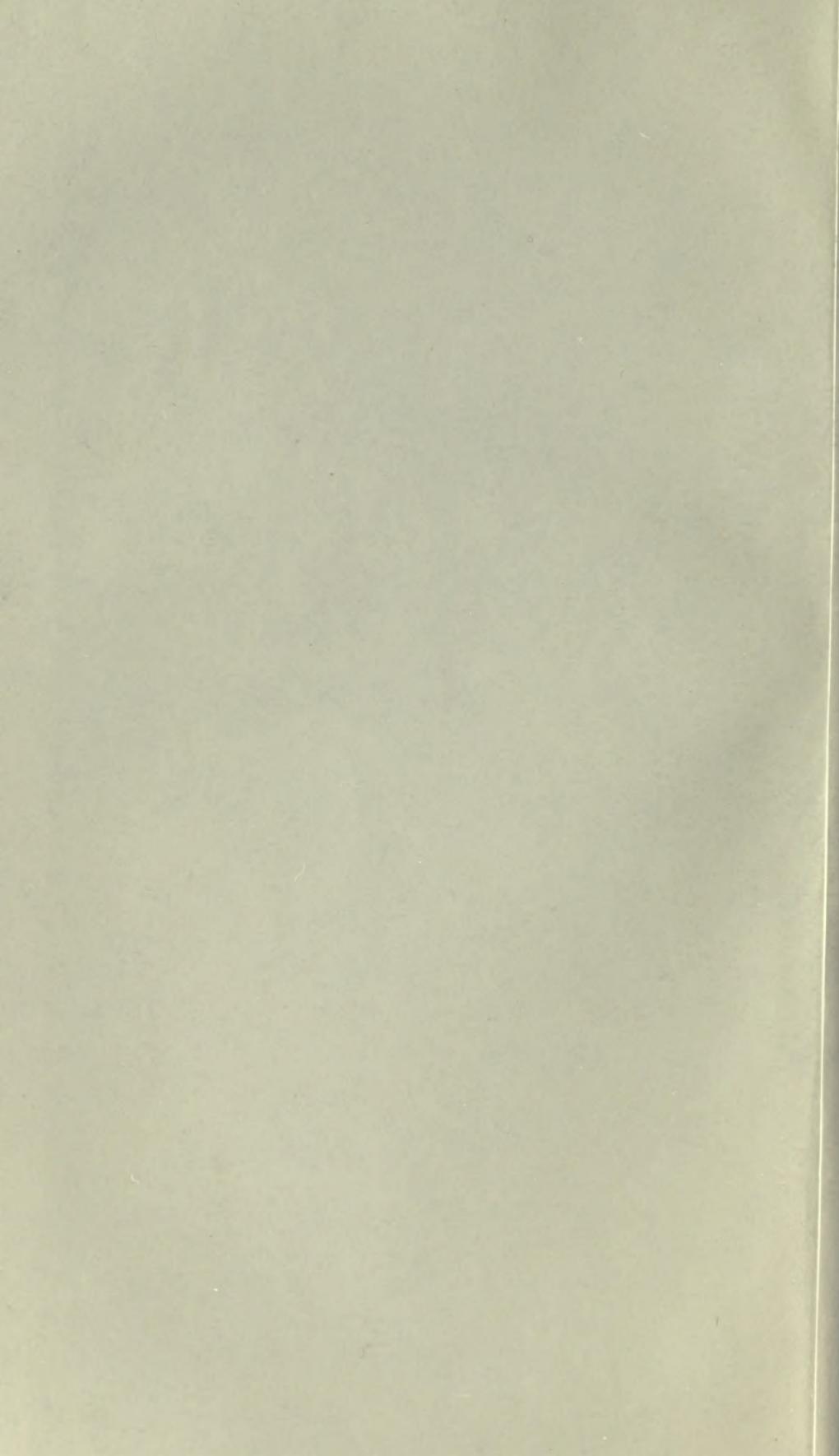


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A

PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

OF THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE ROMANS

AND THE

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS,

IN THE FORM OF

LECTURES,

INTENDED TO ASSIST THE PRACTICE OF DOMESTIC
INSTRUCTION AND DEVOTION.

BY JOHN BIRD SUMNER, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER.



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PREFATORY REMARKS
ON
THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION
AS PROPOUNDED IN
THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

ST. PAUL'S Epistle to the Romans is so universally distinguished as containing the most systematic account of man's redemption, that it may be proper to make a few prefatory remarks upon the general argument, before entering upon the particular exposition. Especially as the doctrine so clearly propounded and so strongly enforced in this epistle; the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, is often assailed, often misrepresented, often misconceived.

Yet it is, in fact, the basis of the gospel revelation; and the question, whether we are justified by faith, or no, is in reality the question, whether we have, or not, an interest, a personal interest, in the covenant of the Gospel. For by faith alone can that interest be obtained.

The Gospel revelation sets out upon the assumption, that the state of mankind is a state of moral ruin, and consequent condemnation. In what manner and by what circumstances they were brought into such a state, is not discussed at any length. A few sentences incidentally occurring in this Epistle, contain nearly all that is said in the New Testament concerning the origin of the evil.¹ But the ruin is implied throughout.

“So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life.”²

“The Son of man is come to *save that which was lost.*”³

“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that *the world through him might be saved.*”⁴

“Ye will not come unto me, that ye *might have life.*”⁵

“The hour is coming, and now is, when *the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.*”⁶

These passages, and every reader of the New Testament is aware how largely they might be multi-

¹ Ch. v. 12—21.

² John iii. 16.

³ Matt. xviii. 11.

⁴ John iii. 16.

⁵ John v. 40.

⁶ John v. 25.

plied—all concur in either positively affirming, or virtually implying that the spiritual condition of mankind is a state out of which they need to be delivered, and out of which there is an intention of delivering them.

The next question must relate to the method of their restoration. Is it to be effected by an intrinsic process, or to proceed from some foreign and external source? Is it to depend on what man is to do in his own person, or on what is wrought for him by another?

Either mode is conceivable. Here are persons in a state of condemnation: and the question is, How are they to be accounted righteous, how justified before God? In the Old Testament the prophets declared, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”⁷ “When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.”⁸ Therefore, as far as appears from these passages, when David,⁹ or when Manasseh¹ repented of their

⁷ Isa. lv. 7.

⁸ Ezek. xviii. 27.

⁹ Ps. li.

¹ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.

transgressions, humbled themselves before God, “ceased to do evil, and learnt to do well,” God was pleased to pardon the sins into which they had fallen through frailty, through temptation, through the influence of Satan, and to receive them again to favour, because of their repentance. In such a case, the salvation of mankind might resemble the account which is given of the cure of Naaman the Syrian, when, in obedience to the command of Elisha, he bathed seven times in the river Jordan, and was recovered of his leprosy.² Naaman was healed through what he did: and though there was much that was miraculous, there was nothing that was vicarious in his restoration.

The Gospel, however, takes a different line. The deliverance which it proclaims, is altogether extrinsic: not dependent upon what man has done or is to do; but is already wrought; and is to be received, not gained: freely conferred, not wrought out by repentance or obedience. The Gospel does not speak in the words of the Law, “This do, and thou shalt live:” but its language is, “Thy sins be forgiven thee: Go in peace.”

Accordingly, the declaration of Jesus Christ represents him as the sole and absolute author of sal-

² 2 Kings v.

vation. When he revealed the purpose of his incarnation in the synagogue of his own city, Nazareth, these were his words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to *heal the broken-hearted*, to preach *deliverance to the captives*, and *recovery of sight* to the blind, to *set at liberty* them that are bruised.”³ When he commissioned his messengers, this was the invitation they were to convey: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.*”⁴ The account of the divine plan which he gave in the gospel revelation is this: “God sent his Son into the world...that *the world through him might be saved.*”⁵ “*He that believeth on him is not condemned*; he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” For the “Son of man came...to *give his life a ransom for many.*”⁶

This revelation of the divine will, declared by our Lord in his discourses, is reasoned upon and fully explained by St. Paul: who sets forth the two different ways in which man might be accounted righteous before God. He might be justified by complete obedience. It “should be our righteousness, if we observed to do all the commandments

³ Luke iv. 18.

⁴ Matt. xi. 28.

⁵ John iii. 17.

⁶ Matt. xx. 28.

before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.”⁷ If, however, men are thus to be accepted on account of that which they perform, their works must be perfect, their obedience complete and universal. The language of LAW is and can be but one: it must condemn every one “that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them.”⁸ And since no man ever has so continued, or will continue; (“for what man is he that liveth and sinneth not?”) therefore, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified before God: “being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” And the whole is summed up by the apostles in a few decisive sentences. “This is the record; that *God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life.”⁹ “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”¹ “He bore our sins in his own body.” “He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”²

Here, then, two states have been described; a state of condemnation, and a state of salvation; and

⁷ Deut. vi. 35.

⁸ Rom. iii. 19. Gal. iii. 14.

⁹ 1 John v. 11, 12.

¹ Rom. viii. 1.

² 1 Pet. ii. 21. iii. 18.

two parties have been brought before us, one requiring deliverance, the other granting it: one in a ruined condition, the other possessing the means of repairing that ruin. The next question which arises respects the mode in which the deliverance offered by the one party, is to be secured by the other. It were a possible case, that a propitiation should have been made and accepted for the sins of men, and that they whose sins were so blotted out, had remained ignorant of the grounds of the mercy shown them, or the means by which it was procured. And indeed we know not the extent to which the atonement is available to multitudes, whose ears have never been gladdened here on earth with the “tidings of great joy;” to those righteous men who desired to see the things which God in due time revealed, but did not see them. The case is conceivable. A rich benefactor might be made aware, that a friend was involved in inextricable debt; he might satisfy the obligations, and relieve him from the threatened ruin; and the debtor himself know nothing more than that his debts did not appear against him.

This, however, is not the actual case, as regards those to whom “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” is revealed. That is first wrought out by the sacrifice of the cross, and then proposed to man’s

acceptance. The benefit is to be obtained by a personal appropriation of that sacrifice to ourselves; that personal appropriation of which Faith is the secret instrument, and Baptism the outward seal.

So the Lord declared: “*He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me,* hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”³ I am the resurrection and the life: *he that believeth on me,* though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth on me, shall never die. Believest thou this?”⁴ “All that the Father giveth me, *shall come to me: and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.*”⁵ “My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and *they follow me;* and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”⁶

In accordance with these promises, the apostles delivered their message. “*Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”⁷ “*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house.*”⁸ “*If thou confess with thy*

³ John v. 24.

⁴ John xi. 25.

⁵ John vi. 37.

⁶ John x. 27, 28.

⁷ Acts ii. 38.

⁸ Acts xiv. 13.

mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”⁹ When Philip explained to the Ethiopian how the prophecies of Isaiah which he had been reading as he journeyed were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ: how it was he who had been “led as a sheep to the slaughter,” and “whose life was taken from the earth;”¹ he exclaimed, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, *If thou believest with all thine heart*, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” I believe that it is he “whom God hath sent to be a Prince and a Saviour:” he who should “redeem Israel.” Then Philip baptized him; and “he went on his way rejoicing.”

Here, then, is one, who perceived that he needed something which he had not: something whereby he might be justified before God, and obtain reconciliation with him. He perceived that what he needed was in Christ Jesus; that peace with God was to be procured through his propitiation: he believed that Jesus was the Son of God, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Therefore he claimed to himself the benefit, in the prescribed way,

⁹ Rom. x. 9.

¹ Acts viii. 26—39.

being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And thus he was accounted righteous before God, who before was not accounted righteous; he, at least, who had no reason to presume upon his acceptance, had now become partaker of an actual covenant, by which God had declared that whoever entered into it, is passed from death unto life.²

What then was the difference between this Ethiopian, and the many Jews with whom Paul remonstrated and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken unto you: but seeing that ye put it from you, and count yourselves unworthy of eternal life, Lo, we turn unto the Gentiles ?”³ The difference was simply, that the Ethiopian believed the words spoken by the apostle, and the Jews believed them not. The Jews trusted that they were already possessed of God’s favour, and refused to believe that eternal life was in Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian believed, that having in himself the sentence of death, through the atonement of Christ that sentence might be reversed. Therefore he “attained to that righteousness, to which Israel did not attain.”⁴

This it is, to be “justified by faith.” And thus it is, that they who believe are justified, whilst they

² See John v. 24.

³ Acts xiii. 46.

⁴ Rom. ix. 31.

who believe not, are condemned. Our Lord sets before us as an example the case of the Israelites in the wilderness. For them there was one remedy; to look upon the brazen serpent which Moses was directed to raise.⁵ If any had refused to look up, denying that the image could convey a cure; their plague must remain upon them. So likewise for Noah, when the deluge was impending, there was one mode of preservation: "Being warned of God, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house."⁶ But if like the rest of his generation, he had mocked at the threatened danger, and refused to betake himself to the refuge, he too must have perished in the waters. These are examples of the way, in which, when God has revealed "one name under heaven, and no other,"⁷ whereby man may be saved; they who believe in that name are justified, and they who believe not, are condemned. God has provided an ark, and they refuse to enter it. God has pointed out a rock on which they may fix their house, and be secure for eternity; but they build on another foundation, and when the waters rise, their house must be overthrown.

When, therefore, Paul says, that faith is counted to us for righteousness; or when our church says,

⁵ John iii. 14. Numb. xxi.

⁶ Gen. vi. Heb. xi. 7.

⁷ Acts iv. 12.

that we are accounted righteous before God for the merits of Jesus Christ by faith ; this must not be understood as if faith were a work of obedience or an act of duty, which God accepts instead of other duties or other obedience, and that therefore the man who has faith, is justified, whilst the man who has not faith, is condemned for wanting it.⁸ The meaning is, that Christ has “redeemed from the wrath to come” “as many as receive him, and believe in his name:” but that he must be trusted by those whom he redeems : that his death must be relied on, in order that it may be efficacious for salvation : faith being, as it were, the graft by which a

⁸ At first sight this notion may appear to be countenanced by the expression, Rom iv. 5,—“ Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness :” but the context disproves such an idea. It will be seen that Paul’s object is to show, not that faith is meritorious, but that eternal life is gratuitous : not of debt, but of grace. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief, and therefore he obtained the promise. So the Christian staggers not at the promise of eternal life through Christ Jesus, and becomes heir of the kingdom.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the state of mind in which faith is produced, has much that is pleasing to God : and that self-righteousness, pride, hardness of heart, are commonly at the root of unbelief : as our Lord often showed in his reproofs to the Jews.

believer is united to the “true vine,”⁹ and separated from the natural corrupt stock, to the root of which the axe is laid.

The cures which our Lord performed illustrate this. We are told, for instance, of a woman who pressed through the crowd which surrounded him, till at last she came near, and touched the hem of his garment.¹ And immediately the plague under which she had been long labouring was removed, and she felt within herself that she was whole. He called her to him, and when he had made all the by-standers acquainted with the circumstances, “he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace.”

What, then, had her faith done for her? Nothing more, than that it induced her to overcome all hindrances and discouragements, until she reached him who as she believed could restore her. It was his divine power, not her belief in that power, which really effected her cure. Her faith was the cause of her being healed, and without that faith the “virtue” of Christ would not have been exercised in her behalf: she would have remained under her malady. But it was not by her faith, that her constitution was recovered. Her “faith made her whole,” by bringing her to him who had power to heal.

⁹ John xv. 5.

¹ Luke viii. 43.

Simple and evident as this seems, many of the cavils which have been employed against the religion of the Gospel arise from overlooking it. Sometimes men speak of faith, as if it were represented as a virtue, in the same sense as honesty, or temperance, or charity, are virtues, and as if God had revealed a reward to faith, which he refuses to temperance, or charity, or honesty. Sometimes, again, the counsels of God are charged with inconsistency, because man is condemned for the want of that which he cannot command by his own will. If a fact be clearly proved, we are told that a man must believe it. Whereas we cannot believe it, unless it be proved to our satisfaction.

All this originates in misconception. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of them that believe, and of them only, just as a physician, who has the sole remedy for some prevailing pestilence, is the preserver of all who come to him for aid, but of no others. Confidence in the physician brings the sufferer for advice: faith in Jesus Christ brings the sinner to his cross, trusting, that “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”

But the worst and most injurious misrepresentation of this doctrine, is to say that it destroys “inherent righteousness;” that a man justified by faith is therefore exempt, or can consider himself exempt,

from the necessity of obedience. Our Lord did not set his disciples free from the obligations of duty, when he showed that they could claim nothing for the discharge of duty, and said, “Ye, when ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.”² Neither does St. Paul exempt the Roman Christians from the obligation to holiness, when he affirms that “as by the offence of one judgment came upon all unto condemnation; so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”³ “To them that are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation,” because “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;” but they that are in Christ Jesus, “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit;” knowing, that “if we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.”⁴ “For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

It may seem a nice distinction, to allow that a man is not saved without good works, and yet to deny that his works contribute to his justification.

² Luke xvii. 10.

³ Rom. v. 18.

⁴ See Rom. viii. 1—14.

But though a nice distinction, it is perfectly intelligible and reasonable. Above all, it is scriptural. It is that conclusion from the whole volume of antecedent revelation which St. Paul was empowered to indite for the instruction and guidance of that world, for which Christ died. Whereas to unite together two things so distinctly separated in the Christian scheme, as man's **JUSTIFICATION** and his **SANCTIFICATION**, is, in effect, to devise a scheme of salvation for ourselves. It confounds the new state in which we are placed, with the new nature which we are to receive. It removes the distinction between what is, and what is not, inherent in us: between what Christ has done, and what he enables us to do. Man's condition, without the satisfaction of Christ, may be illustrated by that of Peter, when, being cast into prison by Herod, he was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains:⁵ and the keepers before the door kept the prison. An angel came, raised him up, released him from his fetters, opened the prison doors, and set him free. In all this Peter had no more part, than man has in his justification. It is "the Lord our righteousness," who "delivers us from the wrath to come." But man being thus delivered, is "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," and walks before God in righte-

⁵ Acts xii. 5, &c.

ousness and holiness; just as Peter gave proof of the liberty which he had attained by the angel's power, when in his own power he hastened to the house of Mary the mother of John, and joined the assembly of the disciples.

This may serve as an illustration of the manner in which the believer is first justified, and then sanctified. He begins by perceiving himself lost, and betaking himself to Christ for deliverance. He proceeds to live, as his deliverer instructs him to live, and enables him to live, and declares that he must live, if he is to receive the benefit he desires. But his instructor and strengthener, is still his deliverer; even if his works were perfect, he is still his deliverer, because without him he would have been lying in darkness: but his works are not perfect, and need his constant thankfulness that they are not his trust; that his ground of confidence is in Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification:—though still he has no other evidence of a title to depend upon his Lord and Saviour, than the testimony of his conscience, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he is living “righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world,” and striving to “be perfect, even as his Father who is in heaven is perfect.”

So that the doctrine on which St. Paul insists, is

this: that the good works which the Christian performs, whether before or after believing, are no meritorious cause of our salvation; have no share in effecting our acceptance with God. And St. James, when he affirms that “by works faith is made perfect,” does not mean that those works *procure* our reconciliation with God, but *prove* it; and in declaring that “by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,”⁶ he means that a man does not with his heart believe unto righteousness, who does not in his life make confession unto salvation.⁷ “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law are justified.”⁸ No others have been justified before God. Known unto him are all things from the beginning. And none are ever received into his favour, whose “patient continuance in well doing” he has not foreseen.

There is, in truth, in the doctrine itself a provision against the licence which is sometimes alleged to spring from it. The more the atonement of Christ is dwelt upon, the greater will appear the heinousness of sin, requiring such an expiation. St. Paul lays great stress on this; and repudiates the idea, that those who have been “baptized into the death of Christ” for sin, “who believe in his death as a propitiation for sin,” should yet admit it into their prac-

⁶ James ii. 14—26.

⁷ Rom. x. 10.

⁸ Rom. ii. 13.

tice, instead of being deterred by the example which that affords.⁹

And if anything can be relied on as the result of experience, this may be fearlessly maintained, and must be re-asserted whenever it is denied: viz. that they who have most intimately understood, in their own hearts, the doctrine of justification by faith, have been the most “careful to maintain good works:” and that they who have most clearly proclaimed that doctrine, in their public ministrations, have been the most successful in producing, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that “holiness” in others, “without which no man shall see the Lord.”

Still, in defiance of such experience, the doctrine of justification by faith is exposed to perpetual cavil. In the many, there is a sort of conventional apprehension of it, as if it must necessarily be connected with licentiousness. And others, of larger information, are swayed, unconsciously to themselves, by the unwillingness of the heart to resign all pretensions of its own: and are thus led to mix up and confound together the merits of Christ and the works of Christians, till there remains no sure ground to rest upon. They plead as their excuse, that morality and works of righteousness are in danger. The same accusation was made against the apostle himself.

⁹ Rom. vi. 4.

He was obliged to meet the objection, “Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound?”¹ “We be slanderously reported, and some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come.” It is no argument, therefore, against the scriptural truth of this doctrine, that it lies open to these imputations. Nay, rather, that such imputations are made, is proof that the doctrine is scriptural. Most unquestionably no other doctrine can be elicited from the Epistle which is considered in the present volume. And I think it will be acknowledged by the attentive reader, that Paul speaks “according to the wisdom given unto him,”² whilst he unfolds the mysterious counsels of God in the salvation of man: and that our Church has no reason to revise her Articles, when she declares it to be “a most wholesome doctrine,” that we are justified by faith only: “that we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deserving.”³

¹ Rom. vi. 1. iii. 8.

² 2 Pet. iii. 15.

³ Art. xi.

EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.¹

LECTURE I.

PAUL'S INTEREST IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AT ROME AND HIS DESIRE TO VISIT IT.

ROMANS i. 1—12.

1. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,*
2. *(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)*
3. *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;*
4. *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*
5. *By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name :*
6. *Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ :*
7. *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints : Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

IT was little to be expected, a few years before, that this letter should be written. It was written

¹ This epistle was written at Corinth, after Paul's second journey through Greece, as he was setting out towards Jerusalem, A.D. 58, according to the most probable calculations.

by Paul, *a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.* Yet this man, who had now *received grace and apostleship*, had once been a persecutor of the apostles: and he who was now preaching the gospel throughout the world, had formerly thought it his duty to oppose and persecute all who believed in that Master, in whose service he was now engaged. For “there is a way which may seem right unto a man,” though “the end thereof are the ways of death.”² God had mercifully turned Paul aside from the error of his way, before it became death to him.

And if it was strange that Paul should write this letter, so it was equally strange that he should be writing it to Christians at Rome:—strange that there should be men there *called of Jesus Christ, beloved of God, called to be saints.*

Some of these had been Jews, brought up in the same way of thinking with the apostle; proud of the law of Moses, and jealous of everything which seemed to rival it, or set it aside. These were now convinced that *Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power:* the Messiah, whom their nation was expecting, to bless all the nations of the earth. Others had been heathens, now *beloved of God*, instead of whom they had been wont to worship idols: now *called to be saints*, who had hitherto not known the meaning of holiness. These had been “convinced of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;”³ and were walking before God as his people, and waiting for the second coming of their Lord.

² Prov. xiv. 12.

³ John xvi. 8.

Such were the persons to whom Paul wishes *grace and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* The common salutation of the world had used to be, Life and happiness be with you! That of the apostle is, *Grace and peace!* and this he looks for, through the only source from which it can be derived: from God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Mediator. He desires that they may be reconciled to God through faith in the gospel of his Son: that grace in an abundant manner may be imparted to them, and their peace may be such as God alone can bestow.

8. *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

9. *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

10. *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

The purpose of his writing, he now states, is to supply the want of his coming in person to them. This he had long wished to do, but *had been let hitherto.* It was natural that he should desire to visit the christian church in that city which had become, in the providence of God, the mistress of all nations; but which had now obtained an eminence to which earthly victories could not have raised it, in that its *faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.* The Christians of Rome, few in comparison with the inhabitants of that great metropolis, and despised in comparison with its orators and conquerors, were still the possessors of real glory. For that is real glory

which remains the longest: and when “the world passeth away and the lust thereof, he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”⁴

There was indeed great reason to *thank God*, that in such a city the power of the gospel should have eminently prevailed. But it was not only that he might witness in person this gratifying sight, that Paul was desiring *a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto them.*

11. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

One object was ever uppermost in the apostle’s mind: growth of grace in himself and others. Therefore he *desired to see them, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift*: that by communicating his own experience he might confirm their faith, and give a fresh impulse to their love. As Barnabas, when he visited Antioch,⁵ and exhorted the newly-converted Christians there to “continue in the grace of God.” The intercourse of ordinary Christians has this effect; they are mutually strengthened and edified, as they “take sweet converse together, and walk in the house of God as friends.” But a visit from the apostle would be a higher privilege, and lead to greater blessings. He could relate to them the “abundance of revelations”⁶ which he had enjoyed: he could speak of the personal assurance which he had received, that God was with him, and directed all his ways: he would be like a traveller from a country to which they were

⁴ 1 John ii. 17.

⁵ Acts xv. 23.

⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

bound, encouraging them to proceed by what he had seen and known of it. And they, on their part, would make a return to him: as they would *be comforted* by his faith, so he by theirs: and finding in the midst of the luxury and business which belongs to a crowded city, a multitude of disciples who had separated from their unbelieving brethren, or renounced the vanities of heathen worship, and were living in obedience to the faith,—he could not but *be comforted*. As it proved a few years afterwards, when in the providence of God he did accomplish his wish, and see Rome: and the brethren, hearing of his approach, “came to meet him as far as Appii forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage.”⁷

We are reminded here, that faith, though real, may be weak and need to be strengthened. St. Paul was anxious to visit the Roman brethren, to the end that they might be established, although their faith was such as to be *spoken of throughout the whole world*. But liable as they were to assaults from within and without, they required continued support, that they might “remain stedfast to the end,” and Satan gain no advantage over them.

We see, too, at the same time, the means by which faith does gain fresh strength. Paul’s presence among the Roman Christians would have the effect of strengthening them. And so may the discourse and exhortation of any Christian to whom God has given in a high degree the gift of faith, or of exhortation, or of prayer. Another Apollos, “an eloquent man and mighty in the

⁷ Acts xxviii. 15.

Scriptures;”⁸ another Barnabas, “a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith;”⁹ may be made the means of *imparting spiritual gifts* to others: may remove their doubts, allay their fears, awaken their zeal, enlarge their charity. And this should be desired and sought at every opportunity; not as though we “had already attained, either were already perfect.”¹ The man would have little self-knowledge, who thought himself so established that he could never fall. He is in danger of losing “what he hath,” who does not use every endeavour, and pursue all proper means, that he may daily “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”²

LECTURE II.

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS i. 13—17.

13. *Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.*

14. *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

15. *So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

The Gospel is for “high and low, rich and poor, one with another.” It is full of interest for *the wise*

⁸ Acts xviii. 24.

⁹ Acts xi. 24.

¹ Phil. iii. 12.

² 2 Pet. iii. 18.

and learned: none such need be ashamed of studying that “which the angels desire to look into.”¹ Yet is it equally “revealed to babes:” so simple, that the most *unwise* may understand. It might satisfy the reason of the civilised *Greeks* or *Romans*. It might convince and edify the uneducated *Barbarian*. And Paul had been set apart for the preaching of the Gospel both to the one and to the other: he was *debtor to both*: he owed a duty to both, which he was equally *ready* to pay to both, in discharge of the office to which he had been called, as the apostle of the Gentiles. So that the majesty of Rome, as mistress of the world; the magnificence of its wealth, the reputation of its philosophers;—none of these would deter him, if only he had opportunity *to preach the gospel to them that were at Rome*. And he states the grounds of this confidence.

16. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

17. *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

At first we may be surprised at the apostle saying that he was *not ashamed of the gospel*. A person does not commonly say of that which is beyond measure excellent, that he is *not ashamed* of it. But he alludes to that which was amongst “the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness:”² he alludes to the humbling doctrines of the gospel, appealing to men as sinners before God, and offering salvation through him who died upon the cross. We may well

¹ 1 Pet. i. 12.

² See 1 Cor. i. 22.

suppose that this doctrine would be scoffed at by the ignorant heathen, or self-righteous Jew. Yet of this doctrine he was *not ashamed*: and adds his reason: *For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* Just as we may conceive of the Israelites in the days of Saul, as ashamed of their champion, when they stood around, and beheld David, a stripling and armed with none other than his rustic weapon, advancing to meet the Philistine giant.³ But the feeling of shame would soon give way to a juster sentiment, when they saw Goliath fall under the stripling's hand, and the Philistines, struck with panic, fly from their position. And such is here Paul's train of thought. He might be *ashamed of the gospel of Christ*, if it merely related that he who came into the world as the Son of God, had suffered the death of the vilest sinners among men. But when that was effected by the Gospel which had never otherwise been effected; when it proved "mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds" of sin and Satan;—then he might retort upon themselves the scorn of the Jew or the ridicule of the philosopher: for this gospel, which they despised, was shown to be *the power of God unto salvation.*

It was, first, *the power of God.* The power of God was evidently employed to establish and maintain it. When the cripple at the gate of the temple who asked alms of Peter and John, recovered the use of his limbs at their bidding:⁴ or when Elymas at the word of Paul became blind on the instant, and went about "seeking some one to lead him by

³ 1 Sam. xvii. 43.

⁴ Acts iii. 7.

the hand:⁵ here was undoubtedly *the power of God*. That was done, which could be done by no other power.

This, however, though proof of the power of God, was not the power of God *unto salvation*. That must be exercised, not on the body, but the soul. And the apostle speaks of the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation, because it brought the souls of men into a state of favour and acceptance with Him.

The Jewish assembly were not in such a state, when they resolved on the death of Jesus, and forced Pilate, against his will, to “crucify him, crucify him.” Not two months afterwards, Peter accused of this sin another company of Jews, and preached to them the same Jesus, as “the Prince of life.”⁶ Such persuasion attended his words, that three thousand received them gladly, and were baptized in the name of Jesus: nay, left their former ways of life, sold their possessions and goods, and formed a company whose sole object it was to serve God, and prepare for a better world. This was *the power of God unto salvation*: for repentance, and faith, and obedience, and the affections taken from things below, and those things used for the purpose of laying up treasure in heaven —these are the signs that “accompany salvation.”

So, when the apostle proceeded to heathen nations, he found them in a state which he describes before the close of this very chapter: he found them filled with all unrighteousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity. It was a state the farthest possible from a state of salvation. He proclaimed the

⁵ Acts xiii. 11.

⁶ Acts ii.

Gospel to them: how “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:” and now commanded all men everywhere to repent, “because he would judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he had ordained.”⁷ They, too, received the word: they “turned from idols to serve the living and true God:” they “were washed, were sanctified, were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”⁸

Thus was the Gospel *the power of God unto salvation*. It did that which no other power can do. It converted men’s hearts: it brought them out of a state in which they were enemies of God through wicked works, and placed them in a state which God regards with favour: it turned them from ways in which those who walk can have no inheritance in the kingdom of God, and it enabled them to look forward to a pure and holy world, beyond the reach of Satan, and free from the defilement of sin.

Justly might Paul say, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*; when he could point to those who had been “dead in trespasses and sins,” and were now quickened into spiritual life: when he saw “the works of the flesh” abandoned, and “the fruits of the Spirit” flourishing in their stead: when he could show the sensual made pure, the covetous made liberal, the malicious made merciful, the “lover of this world” become “a lover of God.” He had good reason to declare, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

⁷ Acts xvii. 30.

⁸ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Not indeed to every one; but *to every one that believeth*. There were those that did not believe; who scoffed alike at its warnings and its promises, being “blinded by the god of this world.” *The righteousness of God from faith*,—the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ,—*is revealed to faith*; it is made known that it may be possessed by faith.⁹ The Gospel can no more save those who do not receive it in full confidence, than the ark of Noah could deliver those who refused to enter it. The promises are exceeding great and precious promises; but they must be credited. The blessing is held forth on the part of God: but the hand must also be stretched out on the part of man, to accept the offered blessing.

And great indeed is the blessing, to him who has stretched out the hand. The support on which he has laid hold, will not fail him in the hour of need: the strength will not yield, on which he leans. *The Gospel is the power of God*. The power of God is engaged in it, for man’s salvation: engaged to overcome all that would oppose his salvation: to strengthen weakness; to enlighten darkness; to dispel doubts; to conquer fears; to break the force of temptation; to frustrate all the arts of Satan. It is exactly that which frail and corrupt nature needs, to urge the heart when it lingers, to sustain it when it droops, to restore it when it fails: to preserve what it has attained of holiness, and to supply what

⁹ Such seems the best explanation of a difficult sentence. As in chapter iii. 22. *Δια πιστεως* there, is here *ἐκ πιστεως*: *ἐπι τους πιστευοντας* there, here *εἰς πιστιν*. The righteousness of God *from or by* faith in Jesus Christ availeth *to* believers.

is still wanting. Who has not cause to say, “Lord, I am weak, undertake for me!” Who will not thankfully acknowledge, “Not I, but the grace of God that was with me?”

LECTURE III.

THE SINFUL CHARACTER OF THE HEATHEN WORLD.

ROMANS i. 18—32.

18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

19. *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

20. *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

21. *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful: but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

22. *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.*

23. *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

St. Paul had been describing the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. And this leads him to show the

need of such salvation, to the Gentile first, and afterwards to the Jew. For, he says, mankind have been living, as if there were no righteous law to govern them, no God to notice them, no judge to punish. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at.”¹ He has not hitherto seen fit to interpose. But now *the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness*. He now “commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and believe the Gospel.” Those who *holding the truth* which might lead them to live righteously, live *in unrighteousness*, must be prepared to give account of themselves to God, “who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

Some one might ask : How can the Gentiles be said to *hold the truth*? They to whom no scriptures have been revealed ? And not having, like the Jews, God’s word made known to them, how are they guilty in not obeying his will ?

St. Paul answers: *Because that which is known of God is manifest in them : for God hath shewed it unto them.* Hath showed it unto them, if not by his word, by his works. Through the world which they saw, they should have looked up to the invisible Creator. When they beheld the sun, and other heavenly bodies, all keeping their regular course ; when they perceived the earth so beautifully supplied with all things for their use : when they thought of themselves—their own bodies so wonderfully contrived, their souls endowed with such precious faculties—they might clearly have understood *the eternal power and Godhead* by which these

¹ Acts xvii. 30.

things were made. When they saw a building, or a statue, or any other work of art, they well knew it must have a maker: and how could they look upon that astonishing fabric, the world around them, or the human body which a statue imitates, and not perceive that these must have had a Creator?

Therefore, says St. Paul, *they are without excuse*. He is without excuse, who does not rightly use the opportunities he has, but neglects and loses them. If a man has enjoyed fair opportunity of advancing himself in the world, and has forfeited it through idleness and folly, we say that he is *without excuse*. If a man who has had the means of learning, still remains ignorant, we blame him beyond another who has possessed no such means. And this was the case with the heathen. *When they knew God, they glorified him not as God*. Instead of glorifying him, they pretended to represent him by *images made like to corruptible man*, they even worshipped in his stead the creatures which he made: they bowed down to *birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things*, saying, “Deliver me, for thou art my God.” What could be more insulting to the divine Majesty?

Further, they showed no gratitude to him for all his goodness. David inquires, in the language of grateful piety, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?”² But though there were many among the heathen who *professed themselves to be wise*, there were none who showed this pious wisdom. They made no such inquiry, *neither were thankful*: they abused the gifts of God, instead

² Psalm exvi. 12.

of taking occasion from them to glorify the Giver. They did not seek to please him; or search after his will that they might obey it. The apostle proceeds to give a dreadful picture of the wickedness they practised. They cast out of their minds the idea of a God, to govern and restrain them, and yielded themselves up to the devices and desires of their own hearts. And God did not interfere, but left them to themselves.

24. *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

25. *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

26. *For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature :*

27. *And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

28. *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

29. *Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

30. *Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,*

31. *Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:*

32. *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

Such was the dreadful state of the heathen world, when the Lord Jesus came to call men to repentance. He saw that the world lay “dead in trespasses and sins.” He knew the consequences of such a state. We cannot for a moment doubt whether misery in another world must follow a life of depravity like that which has been represented. We could never be persuaded that men whose earthly course had been thus corrupt should be taken from it to dwell with God for ever. We must feel sure that it is impossible. And not only were they corrupt, and therefore unfit for heaven, but they were guilty, and therefore deserved the wrath and indignation of God. *They were without excuse. When they knew God, they glorified him not as God. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge.* They shut their eyes against the light they had. They “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

We see in this the natural course of the human heart. Its natural course :—for there was nothing to force it away from God; nothing to urge it on to such wickedness as is described in the apostle’s sad picture. Men were left to their natural tendency: and we see in what course they were carried.

The natural tendency of the heart is still the same; and a constant impulse from above, and a continual effort from within, is needful, or we should be as far as the heathen were from glorifying God, or retaining him in our knowledge. We should not indeed worship *four-footed beasts, or birds, or creeping things.* We should not *change the glory of the uncorruptible*

God into an image made like to corruptible man. But what is the real sinfulness of idolatry? It is the taking honour away from God, and paying it elsewhere. Therefore, to love pleasures, or riches, or honours, or anything in this world more than God, is to deny him his glory. To profane his name; to profane his sabbaths; is *not to glorify him*. To disregard his word, and his will; to keep it out of view in the daily habit of our lives; is *not to glorify him*. God is *not glorified as God*, merely because his existence is acknowledged. To allow that we have a sovereign on the throne, is not to honour the sovereign. To acknowledge that we have a master in authority over us, is not to honour him, unless we follow his directions. A child does not honour one whom he calls his parent, unless he reverences his words and obeys his injunctions. So it is with regard to God. To *glorify him*, is to feel that he is our Maker, and has a right to our service: to inquire, in our particular stations, what he “would have us to do:” to show ourselves sensible that “in him we live and move,” and that to him we must “give account of the things done in the body.”

The lesson is awful with which St. Paul concludes. There is a time, when God gives men up. And this time is hastened, by their not *liking to retain him in their knowledge*. When they drown the voice of conscience; when they close their ears against his word; when they disregard the means they have of knowing more concerning him; when they manifest a disposition to live as if there were no God: then his Spirit will not always strive with men: and he *gives them*

over to a reprobate mind, to follow the workings of their corrupt heart. So the heathen had been left. And if they were *without excuse*, “of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall they be thought worthy,”³ who neglect the clearer light which now shines upon the world, ready to “enlighten every man?”⁴

May it “shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!”⁵

LECTURE IV.

THE SINFUL CHARACTER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

ROMANS ii. 1—11.

1. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.*

2. *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

St. Paul had been setting forth the wickedness of the Gentiles. It showed their need of one who should redeem and convert them. Now the Jews prided themselves that they were not as the Gentiles. They had a knowledge of God; despised the worshippers of idols; kept separate from them. “It was an un-

³ Heb. x. 29.

⁴ John i. 9.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

lawful thing for a man that was a Jew to keep company or to come unto one of another nation.”¹

So that it was needful to show to the Jewish disciples, since there were many such who would receive his letter, that they were no more without blame, no less without excuse in the sight of God, than the Gentiles whom they looked down upon. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, O Jewish man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for thou that condemnest another, doest the same things.* “First cast the mote out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the beam out of thy brother’s eye.”²

3. *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

4. *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

5. *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

The Jewish nation had been long and sorely threatened. John had preached the baptism of repentance; and declared that “the axe was now laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”³ Jesus had confirmed his words, saying, “Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.”⁴ But no repentance followed. They argued, “My Lord

¹ Acts x. 28.

² Matt. vii. 5.

³ Matt. iii. 10.

⁴ Luke xiii. 3.

delayeth his coming.”⁵ They did not judge of that delay as it ought to have been judged of, and see it to be a proof of God’s *goodness and forbearance*; a space granted, when the wicked might “ forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, that he might have mercy upon him.” They treated the longsuffering of God as a plea of excuse for their *hardness and impenitent heart*. God is satisfied with us;—sees no sin in us;—we are the “children of Abraham;” and the children of Abraham have nothing to fear. We “abhor idols,” and will not sit at meat with “sinners of the Gentiles.”

Such were the thoughts which pervaded the Jewish people, wherever settled: whether remaining in the land of their forefathers, or dispersed, like those at Rome, among “strangers and foreigners and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” St. Paul rouses them from their slumber, awakens them to a knowledge of their danger, reminds them of the account to which they must be called, in *the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God* :—

6. *Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*
7. *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:*
8. *But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,*
9. *Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;*
10. *But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:*
11. *For there is no respect of persons with God.*

The two classes into which mankind is divided,

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 48.

are here described. Those who live for this world, and those who look for another. They have two different objects, and two different ways. The way of the one class, is *patient continuance in well doing*. Not to make a temporary resolution; not to enter upon a partial reformation;—not to “receive the word with joy,” and presently, when anything is to be done, or anything left undone, which costs a sacrifice of pains and inclination, to fail and yield;—but to lay out the course of life according to the principles of the Gospel, and to persevere in the same, in spite of difficulties and opposition.

And as this will not be undertaken without an object, so there is an object for which it is undertaken. It is undertaken for the sake of *glory, and honour, and immortality*. “For we look not at the things which are seen, and are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, and are eternal.”⁶ As Paul himself represents his own desire and aim, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”⁷ Towards this “mark I press forward,” *by patient continuance in well doing*: and seek “the prize of our high calling,” *honour, and glory, and immortality*.

The other class is also here described, as those *that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness*.

The Jewish people, in all that related to the Gospel, gave a perpetual example of *contention*. They set aside all the arguments and proofs by which the divinity of Christ was manifested. “Look and see;

⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

⁷ Phil. iii. 11.

for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." "We were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" "Are we blind also?"⁸ And daily they opposed the apostle himself, "forbidding him to preach unto the Gentiles that they might be saved."⁹ Thus they were *contentious, and would not obey the truth*: some pretending that they had light enough: and others preferring to remain in darkness. And the end would be, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil*. "That the righteous should be as the wicked," or the wicked as the righteous,—that is "far from God":¹ far from what we expect from the Governor of the world. Scripture only confirms our reasonable belief, when it denounces *indignation and wrath* against the hardened and impenitent. And it equally agrees with our own reasonable convictions, in saying that *there is no respect of persons with God*: but that all will be rewarded according to their works, and all judged according to their opportunities. So that "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."²

Therefore the Jew had need to examine into his state, and make sure of some better title to eternal life, than God's favour towards him as a son of Abraham. Both eternal life, and eternal death, are to *the Jew first, and also to the Gentile*. As the privileges of the Jew are "great every way," so is his condemna-

⁸ John vii. 52. Matt. ix. 34. John viii. 33; ix. 40.

⁹ Acts, *passim*. See 1 Thess. ii. 16.

¹ See Gen. xviii. 25.

² Acts x. 35.

tion great, if he neglects those privileges. For many shall “come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”³

LECTURE V.

THE EQUAL RULE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT.

ROMANS ii. 12—16.

12. *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;*

13. *(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*

St. Paul had spoken of the judgment which should try the lives of all men, and determine their everlasting destiny according as those lives had been. He now speaks of justice: and declares that God shall judge the world in righteousness: and not as the Jews believed, *with respect of persons.*

Now it is a rule of justice, which Paul himself lays down, (Rom. iv. 15,) that “where no law is, there is no transgression.” For the nature of wrong is to offend against a known duty. In the case, for instance, of the very first sin. If our first parents had

³ Matt. viii. 11.

not been forbidden to eat the fruit of a particular tree, they might have eaten it with impunity: the command to abstain, made it sinful to indulge.

The apostle transfers this general rule to the case of the heathen of whom he was writing. They were not in the same state as the Jews: for to the Jews the will of God had been revealed: to the heathen it had not been revealed. They would not therefore be *judged by the law*, the law of Moses. It would not be charged against them, for example, that they had not kept holy the sabbath-day; because they had never been enjoined to “remember the sabbath-day.” But still they had sinned, and would be judged. They had *sinned without law*; without a written or revealed law, but not without a law of natural reason and understanding, which if their heart had not been too corrupt to follow it, would have taught them ways more pleasing to God than those they practised.

By the same just rule, the Jew must also abide the righteous judgment of God. *For as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.* They might pride themselves in the distinction of possessing a revelation from God, of being his favoured people.¹ But they were happy in knowing his will, only in proportion as they obeyed it. Their privileges made them not the less, but the more, accountable. *For not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified.*

¹ It was a received notion amongst the Jews, that no son of Abraham, no circumcised person could perish: and, on the other hand, that no other could be saved. See this and other like traditions in Whitby, in loco.

14. *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*

15. *Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*

16. *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.²*

When the priest and the Levite in our Lord's parable, seeing a stranger who had fallen among thieves, passed by on the other side, and left him without care: they *sinned in the law*. The law had commanded them to love their neighbour as themselves.³ These transgressed the law, neglecting the neighbour whom they were bound to relieve.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of Melita, where Paul was shipwrecked, *did by nature*, did without the revealed law, *the things contained in the law*. They had not possessed the written law, instructing them to do to others as they would wish it should be done to them. But they *having not the law, are a law unto themselves, shewing the work of the law written in their hearts*: being led by the operation of their own understanding and conscience to do that which it is the purpose of the law to effect. For the history records, how “the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness; for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.”⁴

² The gospel which I preach. Or, as some have supposed, “the gospel according to St. Luke,” dictated by Paul.

³ Lev. xix. 18.

⁴ Acts xxviii. 2.

For God, whilst he left the rest of mankind *without law*, without such a law as Moses delivered to the Jews, still did not leave them without *a law written in their hearts*: not without the light of reason and conscience: not without means of knowing right from wrong, *their thoughts* condemning or absolving them. By this light they might have walked, if it had not been obscured by their own perverseness: and by this light they will be tried, *in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*.

We have an example of this light in the book of Jonah. A storm pursued the vessel in which he embarked from Joppa. “There was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.”⁵ The mariners *had not the law*. They had no revelation of Him, who “in the beginning created the heaven and the earth.” But they believed in some superior Being: they were led by the “things that are made, and clearly seen,” to “Him that is invisible;”⁶ and they believed the storm to be occasioned by his anger: and they believed his anger to be occasioned by transgression. So “they said every man to his fellow; Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is come upon us.” This was *the work of the law written in their hearts, their thoughts accusing, or else excusing one another*.

So likewise in what followed. Jonah, who had *sinned in the law*, felt himself convicted by the law: “and he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.” But *the law written in their hearts* made

⁵ Jonah i. 4—16.

⁶ See ch. i. 20, &c.

them afraid of the guilt of murder. They used every effort to avoid the sad necessity. And at last, when there seemed no other hope, “they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it hath pleased thee.”

Truly the mariners of Joppa shall rise up in judgment against many of the generation to which Paul was writing: many who boasted of themselves that they were righteous, and despised others who *had not the law*. There was no such dread of shedding innocent blood at Jerusalem, when the Pharisees held it to be expedient that Jesus should be put to death, lest the Romans should “come, and take away their place and nation.”⁷ There was no such tenderness of conscience, when the people cried out with one accord, “His blood be on us, and on our children.”⁸

But “that servant which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.”⁹ For “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”¹

⁷ John xi. 50.

⁸ Matt. xxvii. 25.

⁹ Luke xii. 47, 48.

¹ Acts x. 34, 35.

LECTURE VI.

THE JEWS CONDEMNED FOR THEIR HYPOCRISY
AND DEPENDENCE UPON OUTWARD FORMS.

ROMANS ii. 17—29.

17. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

18. And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

19. And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness;

20. An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

These verses give a lively picture of the Jewish mind, depending upon privileges, the right use of which they knew not. *Behold, thou art called a Jew.* Like Paul's adversaries at Corinth, of whom he says: "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I."¹ Again, *Thou restest in the law.* As the Pharisee: "I am no extortioner, unjust, adulterer; I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess."² Again, *Thou makest thy boast of God.* So the Pharisees contended against Jesus. "We have one Father, even God."³ They were *instructed out of the law;* and said "This people, which know not the law, are cursed."⁴

To those who cherished this habit of mind, Paul

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 22.

² Luke xviii. 11.

³ John xiii. 41.

⁴ John xiii. 49.

addresses himself, and shows that the knowledge of which they boasted might prove their condemnation, and their confidence put them to shame.

21. *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*

22. *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*

23. *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

24. *For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.*

The name of God was dishonoured through those who ought to have made his glory known. It was a heavy aggravation of David's sin, that he had "given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme."⁵ And so it was a heavy charge against the Jews, that they who in their intercourse with foreigners appeared as worshippers of the true God, and abhorred the idolatry which was around them, did a dishonour to Him of whom they boasted, by living in a way which even the heathen must condemn. *As it was written* by Ezekiel, (xxxvi. 20,) "When they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land."

What was their state then? Was it nothing to have a knowledge of God, to be dedicated to his service by the ordinance which he had appointed? Paul is far from saying this. It was a special mercy

⁵ 2 Sam. xii. 14.

and privilege to be brought to God's service, if they did serve him. But if they who were called his servants ceased to obey, their title to his favour ceased, and must be given to others.

25. *For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law ; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.*

26. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision ?*

27. *And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law ?*

If the uncircumcised heathen keep the law, shall not he, though not within the covenant, have the blessing of the covenant ? To say this, is not to deny that a peculiar blessing was conferred upon the people of Israel. A son is profited, who is heir to a rich father, and keeps the condition on which he is to possess the estate. He is in very different circumstances from another, who has no such relationship, no such inheritance. So *circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law* : it has great and precious promises annexed to it. But if the son break the condition on which his inheritance rested, then he forfeits all his original advantages : and he has less right to favour than a stranger, who has no conditions imposed upon him, and yet does that, which the son was required to do, and failed.

Therefore, the heathen, if led *by nature*, by the right use of their natural reason, to that righteousness which the law was designed to establish, may *judge*, and condemn those, who *by the letter and the*

circumcision, having the written law and the ordinances, yet transgress the law, disobey the commands of God.

28. *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ;*

29. *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

The Jews had fallen into the common error, satisfying themselves with forms and outward ceremonies; which are designed to influence the heart, and produce inward feelings; but not to be instead of the service of the heart. We are circumcised, they argued ; and this makes us the people of God. No, says the apostle; this is a token that you are dedicated to God, and ought to live as his people; but if you have the form of dedication, and nothing more, what shall it profit? *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly ;* who has merely the outward sign. That is a proof of what he ought to be; not of what he is. We might compare it to the ring which is given in marriage. The ring is a sign of wedlock, but no proof of conjugal faithfulness: it is a sign that there ought to be love, but no proof that there is love. And so of circumcision. That is not in itself devotedness to God: nor has it any value, unless it is attended by those inward feelings which lead to dutiful obedience.

What St. Paul here affirms of the Jewish ordinance, we may justly apply to the ordinances of the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. These

more concern us; for there is always danger lest too much stress be laid on the outward ceremony.

Baptism is an emblem of the putting off the old nature, and receiving a new and better nature; a sign of being taken from the power of Satan and admitted into the favour of God. But unless the Spirit of God do indeed produce this change, and unless the evidence of it appear in the behaviour, the man is really “dead,” and has but “a name to live.” “Baptism doth save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.”⁶ The baptism of Simon Magus was merely *outward in the flesh*:⁷ there was no answer of a good conscience; for he remained worldly and covetous within; his heart set on earth, and not on heaven.

And so of the Lord’s Supper. That is not receiving the body and blood of Christ, which is *outward in the flesh*. It is not the form that profits, but the mystery which the form represents; not the outward action, but the inward faith from which it proceeds. The Lord’s Supper indicates the feelings of the heart, when the heart desires to be thus reminded of the body which bore its sins, and of the blood which atoned for its transgressions. The heart which feels this, “verily and indeed receives the body and blood of Christ” in this holy sacrament.⁸ But that is not an ordinance *of the heart*, but *of the letter*, when the careless, worldly, unrenewed man complies with the form, because it is the custom of the church: or when one who feels his strength decaying takes re-

⁶ 1 Peter iii. 21.

⁷ Acts viii. 13—21.

⁸ Church Catechism.

fuge in the outward rite, with no sense of the mystery which it represents.

So that “we may truly say of these things, what St. Paul says of circumcision and other Jewish privileges. They do verily profit, if thou keep the law of Christ. But if thou be a transgressor of that law, thy baptism is no baptism, thy Christianity is no better than heathenism. For he is not a Christian *who is one outwardly*, neither is that baptism which is *outward in the flesh*: but he is a Christian *who is one inwardly*, and baptism is *that of the heart, in the spirit*, and not only that according to the letter of the Gospel.”⁹

LECTURE VII.

THE DEALINGS OF GOD TOWARDS THE JEWS CLEARED FROM OBJECTIONS.

ROMANS iii. 1—8.

1. *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision?*

2 *Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles¹ of God.*

The Jewish nation was the chosen nation. Moses had declared, (Deut. xxvi. 18,) “The Lord hath

⁹ Archbishop Sharpe. Sermons, vol. vi. 17. Referring, of course, to those who have reached years of discretion.

¹ Inspired words: as Acts vii. 38.

avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour: and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken." This covenant had been sealed by the ordinance of circumcision. But now God was threatening to cast off this people, and the Gentiles were to possess their privileges. *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision?*

The apostle replies, that the Jews had enjoyed great advantage. They had been the depositaries of divine truth. What was hidden from others, had been declared to them. When "the world by wisdom knew not God," the Jews were made acquainted with him by revelation. Was this nothing? Did not this prove that God had "chosen them to be a special people unto himself, above all the nations of the earth?"²

We are all, like the Jews, apt to pride ourselves on our privileges: and to forget, as they did, that privilege is responsibility. To possess *the oracles of God*, is an *advantage, great every way*. Yet the same word of God, which is eternal life "to them that believe," is "to them that perish foolishness." It condemns those, who "neglect the great salvation" which it reveals.

An objector might still say, What becomes, then, of God's promises? Some, it is true, nay many, have received *the oracles of God* in vain. But shall God

² Deut. vii. 6.

on this account withdraw his solemn covenant? Shall their unfaithfulness make God unfaithful?

3. *For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?*

4. *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.³*

No such thought must be admitted, as that God can break his promise. “God is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent.”⁴ When the promise was given to the nation, the obedience of the nation was required. The promise is binding no longer than whilst that condition is fulfilled. But even if this were otherwise, man’s notions must be wrong, if they contradict the attributes of God. *Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.* The truth and faithfulness of God is a fixed principle which nothing can overthrow. *As it is written* by your great ancestor, David;⁵ who proclaimed the truth of God, even to his own condemnation; and acknowledged, “Against thee have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:” *that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.* And so be assured that God’s “counsels of old are faithfulness and truth:” He “will not break his covenant nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips.” “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”⁶

Another objection might be started. Granted, then,

³ Ps. li. 4. Where David confesses, that he cannot reply against God.

⁴ Numb. xxiii. 19.

⁵ Ps. li. 4.

⁶ Isa. xxv. 1; Ps. lxxxix. 34; Numb. xxiii. 19.

our unbelief does not *make the faith of God of none effect*. It rather serves to establish his faithfulness. It might therefore be argued; why should God *take vengeance* (bring chastisement) upon conduct, which after all contributes to the setting forth of his glory?

5. *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.)*

6. *God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*

7. *For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?*

8. *And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.⁷*

Thus St. Paul meets the question which arises against the moral government of God. Nothing can be done without his permission: and all that is done will conspire to give him glory. “Why does he then find fault?” If good comes out of the evil, may we not do the evil, and be blameless?

Such an argument, says St. Paul, would confound right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Our common notions contradict it. Admit this, and *how shall God judge the world?* How make a difference between the righteous and the wicked, if nothing is to be treated as wickedness which God turns to his own *glory*, or causes to prove his *truth*?

It was wise, for instance, and kind in Joseph, to speak the words of comfort to his brethren, who had been sufficiently humbled for their crime: when

⁷ Who incur just condemnation, for perverting what we say.

after their father's death he quieted their fears, and said, (Gen. 1. 20,) "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Such was the beneficial event, which resulted from the murderous intent of Joseph's brethren. Still that result could never excuse their action. No subsequent good could ever efface the evil purpose, when "they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh; come now, therefore, and let us slay him."⁸

Nay, if we were to admit the principle of *doing evil that good may come*, Judas himself might excuse his guilt. He, by his treachery, betrayed Jesus to the Pharisees. This led to his condemnation and death: and his condemnation and death "fulfilled those things which God had before shown by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer."⁹ But the conscience of Judas could not find this comfort. He felt, and justly felt, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."¹⁰

Here then we must take our stand. "The transgression of the law is sin." And God is not *unrighteous, who taketh vengeance upon transgression. Our unrighteousness may commend the righteousness of God.* But we are unrighteous notwithstanding. Our unfaithfulness may serve in the end to display his truth. But his wisdom which leads to this result, cannot palliate our disobedience. We are not the less evil, when we offend against his law, though he is good, and causes our wrong to minister to his praise.

⁸ Gen. xxxvii. 19.

⁹ Acts iii. 18.

¹⁰ Matt. xxvii. 4.

LECTURE VIII.

THE GUILT OF THE JEWISH NATION PROVED.

ROMANS iii. 9—20.

9. *What then? are we better than they? No, in nowise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*

St. Paul had been conceding to the Jews, that their nation had “an advantage great every way.” And now he shows the melancholy fact, how little the nation had profited by that advantage. As he had already proved, they were *no better than others*. If the Gentiles could not be justified before God, neither could they. He takes his proof of this from their own Scriptures. He did not wish to be the accuser of his nation, though he could not keep back the truth. Therefore he quotes the words of David and the prophets, written long before: as if to say, See now the description of those who flatter themselves that they are righteous, and boast that they have Abraham as their father.

10. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one:*

11. *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

12. *They are all gone out of the way, they are together*

become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.¹

13. *Their throat is an open sepulchre ;² with their tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips :*

14. *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness :³*

15. *Their feet are swift to shed blood :⁴*

16. *Destruction and misery are in their ways :*

17. *And the way of peace have they not known :⁵*

18. *There is no fear of God before their eyes.⁶*

A sad description of man, once formed in the image of God. And yet the too just description of those who are not renewed in the spirit of their minds. It represented the state of unconverted man in the time of David, who wrote these words. A thousand years after, Paul applies it to his own time. And may not we ourselves appeal to it ?

If man is *righteous*, it is not his original nature. Left to himself, *there is none that understandeth* his position in the world, or *seeketh after God*. He goeth *out of the way* which God has prescribed for his people, and is *unprofitable* : does him no service. The *throat* is too often as *an open sepulchre*, disgusting those that pass by. The *tongue*, which is man's distinguishing property, is employed to *use deceit* : nay, to blast and destroy like *the poison of the asp* : or to express in *curses* the *bitterness* which lurks within. Instead of *the way of peace*, private strife and public wars spread *destruction and misery* abroad. The fear of man is far more commonly *before the eyes*, than *the fear of God*. And the language of Pharaoh is

¹ Ps. xiv. 1—3.

² Ps. v. 9.

³ Ps. x. 7.

⁴ Prov. i. 16.

⁵ Is. lix. 7, 8.

⁶ Ps. xxxii. 1.

often the language of the tongue, and still oftener the language of the heart; “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord.”⁷

This, it seems, was the course which the Jewish character followed, as it is the course which is taken in every age and country by those whose nature is not changed. To set God before us; to understand what we owe him as his creatures; to govern the tongue, so that only that shall proceed out of the mouth which is “good for the use of edifying;” to avoid all “strife and envying;” to “follow peace with all men;”—this is not the course in which human nature runs: it must be laboriously brought into this channel, and carefully hindered from breaking out of it. The Jewish people had not so lived: as their own David, as their own prophets had said, and they could not deny the truth. They could not pretend that the Psalmist was speaking of the Gentile, and not the Jewish character. His words had become part of their own Scriptures, and they could not dare to contradict them. They must own themselves condemned. We know that what is said in Scripture must apply to them to whom the Scripture is revealed. The prophets were not condemning the heathen who could not know the will of God, but the Jew who did.

19. *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Such is the conclusion. When the character and

⁷ Ex. v. 2.

conduct of man is set on the one side, and the law of God on the other, *no flesh shall be justified in his sight*. *For by the law is the knowledge of sin*: the knowledge, not of the faithfulness with which we have obeyed, but of the extent to which we have transgressed. The rule shows the unevenness of the line. This is the basis of the Gospel; and to confess it, is the first principle of Christian faith. Man ruined by sin: his nature such, that he “cannot prepare himself, and by his own strength, to faith and calling upon God”⁸ and therefore lying under God’s wrath: the object, not of his favour, but of his indignation. And yet, of his compassion too: for when *all the world* had thus *become guilty before him*, he opened a way for their deliverance, and the Gospel proclaims that way. “The Scripture concludes all under sin,” not to show that they must perish, but that they may obtain salvation. It proves to man the weakness of the title to which he may be trusting for his future inheritance: but not to leave him poor, but to make him rich indeed: to bestow on him a title which cannot be set aside, to raise him to an estate too valuable to be calculated. It stops every mouth from boasting, because salvation by grace must be sought that it may be obtained, and will never be sought unless the need of it is perceived. Those will not seek Christ’s righteousness, who are satisfied with their own.

It is only, however, *by the law*, that *the knowledge of sin* is acquired, or the consciousness of it felt. Till God is perceived to be a Governor and a Judge: till the extent and holiness of his commandments are

⁸ Art. x.

understood through the Scripture: there is no knowledge, no proper consciousness of sin. A sense of sinfulness does not necessarily arise from actual transgression: nay, strange to say, those who have the most actual transgression, are often the slowest to be convinced of sin. The law must be applied to our consciences, and our hearts and lives examined and directed by it: and so the *mouth is stopped* by a man's own convictions: and he willingly joins in the confession which the wicked cannot utter; “O Lord, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and thy judgments.” “O deal not with us according to our sins, neither reward us after our iniquities.”⁹

LECTURE IX.

MAN JUSTLY CONDEMNED, IS FREELY PARDONED
THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST
JESUS.

ROMANS iii. 21—31.

21. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*
22. *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*
23. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

⁹ Dan. ix. v.

24. *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus :*

When the Lord Jesus had fulfilled his ministry, and was about to return to the Father, these were some of his words : “ Father, I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do : And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”¹

This describes the righteousness which is *of the law*. The son of Adam, concerning whom this could be truly affirmed, would be *justified by the deeds of the law*. So it was declared of the Hebrews of old ; “ And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.”²

But the apostle has reason to affirm, that in this way no flesh shall be justified before God : for *there is no difference* ; for *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*. In one respect there is difference : the degree of sin is far greater in some than in others. In this there is no difference : no man living has “ continued in the things that are written in the book of the law to do them.”³

But there is a *righteousness of God without the law*, not depending upon complete obedience to the law—which though only now *manifested*, was long ago *witnessed by the law and the prophets* : by the law of Moses preparing for it, and by the prophets foretelling it. It is the righteousness which God imputes to the believer in Christ Jesus.

¹ John xvii. 4, 5.

² Deut. vi. 25.

³ See Gal. iii. 10.

25. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

26. *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

“God, who in time past spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son:”⁴ spoken as a sovereign might address his guilty subjects. Ye have rebelled, and by a just law your lives are forfeited. But this my Son has prevailed with me for you. He has rendered me such services, that I can deny him nothing: and I proclaim free pardon to all who shall surrender themselves to him, to serve hereafter under his banner. My justice must be satisfied; but this my Son has satisfied it; he has purchased the benefits which I propose to you: and therefore I can at the same time be just, in avenging sin, and just in forgiving it; the debt is remitted to you, because it has been paid by your Redeemer.

This is the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

27. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

28. *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

By the law of works, there might be *boasting*. “To him that worketh, the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt.” If a man were accepted, because it could be justly affirmed that he had “walked in

⁴ Heb. i. 1.

all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; because in letter and spirit he had kept them all from his youth up:—he might come before God with some show of reason, and say, “Lord, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.”⁵ But because there is no such man; “no man that liveth, and sinneth not;” God has *declared his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past*: and the man who believes in Christ, is justified, accounted righteous, though by the rule of law he would be condemned. As the malefactor on the cross believed, and sought a place in the kingdom of Christ. “His faith was counted unto him for righteousness,” and he was *justified without the deeds of the law*. It was promised him, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”⁶

It was this mercy of God which the apostle was commissioned to proclaim. And shall not such mercy, which is sufficient for all, be extended and made known to all? Shall not he, who is “the glory of his people Israel,” be also “a light to lighten the Gentiles?”

29. *Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles?* Yes, of the Gentiles also:

30. *Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*⁷

31. *Do we then make void the law through faith?* God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

⁵ Luke xviii. 11.

⁶ Luke xxiii. 43.

⁷ The two prepositions *by* and *through*, have the same meaning here: as also Phil. iii. 9,—“The righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

As Jesus had himself said, “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” One important part of the Jewish law, was its continual sacrifices. These offerings are *established*, when their meaning is explained: and it is shown that “ the blood of bulls and of goats can never take away sins,”⁸ but were merely a standing proof that “ the wages of sin is death.” We do not, then, *make void the law*, when we proclaim the one great sacrifice which has superseded every other; and made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of all men.⁹

Another important part of the law was its moral precepts. And these commands of the law are *established*, when their extent is shown; how they reach to the thoughts and intents of the heart: when it is declared, that “ we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body:”¹ and that “ without holiness, no man can see the Lord.” Therefore we *establish the law*, by preaching faith in Him, who will “ put his laws into our minds, and write them on our hearts,”² and enable us to be “ doers of the law, not hearers” only.

If, then, it is to *make void the law*, to prove its extent and obligation: if it is to *make void the law*, to show that it must be fulfilled: if it is to *make void the law*, to show that its demands have been exacted to the uttermost: then do we *make void the law*, when we preach salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. But if it is to *establish the law*, to show that

⁸ See Heb. x. 1—4.

⁹ Heb. ix. 28.

¹ 1 Cor. v. 10.

² Heb. viii. 10.

“not one jot or one tittle can pass from it;” if it is to *establish the law*, to write it on the “fleshly tables of the heart;”³ if it is to *establish the law*, to teach that we have “not yet attained, either are already perfect,” but must “go on unto perfection;” then, truly, we do not *make void the law through faith*; *God forbid!* yea, *we establish the law*.

LECTURE X.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS iv. 1—8.

1. *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?*
2. *For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.*
3. *For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.¹*

The Jewish people looked to Abraham as their great example. When, therefore, Paul brought forward a doctrine which was new and strange to them, they would naturally refer to Abraham. They knew that he was counted righteous; and would consider his righteousness as the rule for theirs. Paul, therefore, inquires what Abraham *found*, or obtained, *as pertaining to the flesh?* What did he receive from any deed, merit, or obedience of his own? For if

³ Matt. v. 18. ⁴ Phil. iii. 12; Matt. v. 48.

¹ Gen. xv. 6.

he were accepted of God because of his works, *he hath whereof to glory*: he would have something to boast of. The man who by labour, perseverance, and ability, has gained for himself a fortune, is in a different case from him who has been endowed by the free bounty of his sovereign. Was it then so with Abraham? He has no such boast to make *before God*. For Scripture expressly says, *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*. It is not said that he fulfilled the law, wrought the works of righteousness, and was justified: but that he *believed*. And his reward was free; we are not told that his works were repaid; but that his faith was taken as righteousness. If God had set his works to his account, or recompensed him accordingly, he might be said to have *found* or obtained something *as pertaining to the flesh*. But, as it was, God set his faith to his account; and that was imputed to him for righteousness. God did not justify him, because he wrought the good works of obedience; but because he reposed implicit faith in his word, and “staggered not at his promises.” And there is a wide difference, between what is received because it is earned and due, and what is received because it is freely given.

4. *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

5. *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

The labourers in the parable who were hired into the vineyard, came in the evening to receive their own. The master had agreed with them for a penny

a-day.² And when the evening came, they received every man a penny. Their reward was *not of grace but of debt*. But when the Lord said to the woman of Canaan, “O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”³ and she was healed of her disease: that was not of debt, but of grace: she believed, and her *faith was counted for righteousness*. And such is true christian faith. The Christian *worketh* indeed; but with a view of justifying himself, *he worketh not*: “it costs more to redeem the soul:” and that work he commits to him *who justifieth the ungodly*.

So then it was with our father Abraham. And the same which we have seen in Abraham, we find also to be the case with David. He also speaks not of merits, but of mercy: not of debt, but of grace. It does not enter into his mind that any one can *have whereof to glory before God*.

6. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,*

7. *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

8. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*⁴

So our own David writes. He might have said, and said with great truth, Blessed is the man who hath committed no iniquities; who has “continued in all things that are written in the law, to do them.” If we can find such a man, we may well pronounce him blessed. And the nearer any one approaches to

² Matt. xx. 1—12.

³ Matt. xv. 28.

⁴ Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

such obedience, the more blessed is he. But David does not so express himself, because he was himself a man, and was aware of the “law of sin which was in his members.” And he wrote for men, who were, like himself, frail and corrupt, in whom, as in himself, “the flesh lusteth against the spirit.” And he knew, that the more enlightened they became in the knowledge of God and the knowledge of themselves, so much the more they would be conscious of their sinfulness: and so much the more liable to despair, if he had only said, Blessed is the man who is without sin, instead of the man *whose sins are covered*: if he had said, Blessed is the man in whom the Lord can find no iniquity, and not the man *whose iniquities are forgiven*.

And truly thankful may we be to have this assurance, that there are those to whom *the Lord will not impute sin*. On no other ground could we look towards judgment with any comfort. We should be trying to weigh our respective portions of obedience and disobedience, and to see which was heaviest. We should be putting in one scale the strength of passion, and in another the strength of reason, to examine which ought to have prevailed. We should be balancing ignorance against knowledge, and power of temptation against power of conscience; and doubt within ourselves whether ignorance or temptation would furnish an excuse, or whether we had sinned against light and knowledge. We should be comparing what we supposed to have been good in our lives, with what we knew had been wrong; and thus miserably doubting, whether we had more ground to hope for God’s favour, or to fear his anger.

David himself may be an instance, in whom, whilst there was much after God's own heart, there was also much to call for God's wrath and indignation. How could he ever know his future prospects, if God had not revealed his mercy to him? And Paul likewise, who had been “a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious” to the church of God. How could he ascertain whether his services would be more effectual to justify, or his offences to condemn him? What comfort could he have enjoyed, except the comfort which he really found, that *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?*

But although the Christian, in one sense, *worketh not*; although he does not work for hire, and looks for no *reward as a debt*; still he knows that “by works his faith must be made perfect.”⁵ He desires to be a diligent servant, though he owns himself to be “an unprofitable servant.” If he were to remain ungodly, he could not be sincerely *believing on him who justifieth the ungodly*. He does not presume to appear before God, trusting in his own righteousness. But neither could he presume to appear before God, trusting in the righteousness of the Redeemer, unless he were labouring to make that righteousness the pattern of his own, and striving to be perfect even as his Lord who is in heaven is perfect.

⁵ James ii. 22.

LECTURE XI.

THE PROMISE MADE TO FAITH.

ROMANS iv. 9—25.

St. Paul had been speaking of that which is the highest state of blessedness for man, a state of peace with God. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* But the Jews were disposed to deny that this favour could belong to any except their own nation: the “chosen nation,” separated from others by the law of Moses, and dedicated to him by the rite of circumcision. This question is settled by going back to Abraham, the founder of their race. What was reckoned to him for righteousness? Circumcision, or faith? We say, Faith: and that, before he was circumcised: so that circumcision was the seal of Abraham’s faith, but not the ground of God’s favour.

9. *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision (the Jewish people) only, or upon the uncircumcision (the Gentiles) also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

10. *How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

11. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that be-*

lieve, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12. *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

God first declared his favour to Abraham; promised to be his “shield, his exceeding great reward.”¹ He then, on a subsequent occasion, marked him as his own by a peculiar ordinance; just as we first make a contract, and then seal it. So that circumcision was to Abraham, what baptism was to the Ethiopian, (Acts viii. 36—38,) who said to Philip, “See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And they went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him.” Thus baptism was the seal of the righteousness of the faith which the Eunuch had, being yet unbaptized: and *circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised.*

And not only *was* this so; but it *must needs* be so, that the terms of the promise might be fulfilled. It was a free promise given to faith. Therefore it could not be made dependent on obedience to the law.

13. *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

14. *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.*

¹ Gen. xv. 1.

15. *Because the law worketh wrath, for where no law is, there is no transgression.²*

16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*

17. *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*

18. *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.*

19. *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*

20. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

21. *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

22. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

St. Paul's purpose here, is to show that Abraham enjoyed the divine favour on the same terms on which any can enjoy it; through grace, by believing the promises of God. The Jew would argue, that Abraham received the blessing by entering into the covenant of circumcision. No, says the apostle: God gave him the promise that he should be *head of the world*, (that his seed should inherit infinite blessings,) long previously to his giving him the sign of circumcision.³

² By the law there would be *wrath*, not favour; the law not being perfectly kept: but *where no law is*, men are not treated as transgressors.

³ See Gen. xv. 1—5.

Moreover, if the blessing came through circumcision, *the promise would be made of none effect*; which said, that “in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed;” *not those only which were of the law*. Faith, too, would *be made void*: whereas it was his faith, and not his obedience, which was “counted to him for righteousness.”

And this decides the question, whether *the blessedness cometh upon the circumcision only*. If it came through the ordinance of the law, only those which are of the law could be heirs of the promise: but as it came through faith, then all that are of the faith are heirs: and Abraham, as *the father of us all*, has bequeathed the example of faith to his children. The word of the Lord came to him, (Gen. xv. 4—6,) “This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief*: he did not bring forward difficulties or objections; but was *fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform*.

St. Paul, then, proposes this faith as a pattern for ours. God offers us, not the same, but far greater blessings, which he expects us to take on his word, and which we can only inherit by believing him. His promise is, (Rom. x. 9,) “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Much, without doubt, might

be argued against this. Some may think that their “own works and deservings” would make a proper ground of favour; and some find it hard to understand how the merits of Christ should be imputed to themselves; or how the Lord should “lay their iniquities upon Him.” So Abraham might have disputed;—Why should God take me out of my native land? How can he give me a son in my old age? But he did not thus argue against God. *Being strong in faith, and giving glory to God*, he believed God’s word, and *therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness*.

23. *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;*

24. *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;*

25. *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

He was delivered for our offences. This is the simple statement; “All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” *He rose again for our justification.* Triumphing over death, he proved that he “had power to lay down his life, and to take it again;” that “having life in himself,” he is “mighty to save,” and “quickeneth whom he will;” and is able to present as righteous before God, “as many as receive him, and believe in his name.”

Therefore, “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”⁴

⁴ Rev. i. 6, 7.

LECTURE XII.

THE APOSTLE'S GROUND OF CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD.

ROMANS V. 1—5.

1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*
2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Such is the blessedness of one who has embraced the offer of the Gospel, and is content to receive salvation as the gift of God through Jesus Christ. He is *at peace with God*. His sins, which are many, are forgiven; his infirmities, which are constant, shall not condemn him. He can look towards God as a reconciled Father, whose judgment he need no longer dread. The sin which would give him cause to dread, has been effaced from the book of God's remembrance by the blood of atonement in which he trusts, and which God has declared to be all-sufficient. This reconciliation is not a thing to come hereafter, for which he must wait till the judgment-day: it is a present possession. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.* “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus:” for whose sake the Lord has put away their sins, and accounts them righteous before him. This was the language of the Redeemer himself, the author of

the blessing. He said of the penitent Zaccheus, “ This day is salvation come unto this house.”¹ He declares of those who trust in him, They have “ passed from death unto life.”² His words to those whose diseases he cured were these: “ Thy faith hath saved thee.” “ Thy sins are forgiven.” “ Go in peace.”³

And as the present state of the believer in Christ Jesus is a state of grace and favour, so his future life is *in hope of the glory of God*. He has been redeemed from death, that he may inherit everlasting life. And in this prospect he *rejoices*: rejoices with a joy which rises above all present trials, knowing that they are means towards an end, and shall all contribute to the same merciful purpose of God respecting him. As St. Paul proceeds to say;

3. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*

4. *And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*

5. *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

As much as to say, Our rejoicing is not lessened by all the afflictions which abide us. They all tend towards the great object, our final salvation. *Tribulation worketh patience*:⁴ gives occasion of endurance, and evidence of perseverance. Patience worketh *experience*.⁵ If there is no exercise of patience, there can be no experience; no experimental proof of the stedfastness of faith. Such experience work-

¹ Luke xix. 9.

² John v. 24.

³ Luke vii. 50; Matt. ix. 2; Mark v. 34, &c.

⁴ *υπομονὴν*.

⁵ *δοκιμην*.

eth *hope*: gives reason for a confident expectation of those “good things which God has prepared for them that love him.” And it is a *hope that maketh not ashamed*: does not bring reproach on those who indulge it, by disappointing them in the hour of trial. There might be a hope which did cause shame. When Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to sacrifice, it was agreed that they should call on the name of their gods, and he should call on the name of the Lord: “and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”⁶ It was a hope that *made ashamed*, when the priests called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon: but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. Whereas the hope of Elijah was a hope that *maketh not ashamed*, did not cast reproach on him who rested on it: when at his prayer, the fire of the Lord came, and consumed the burnt sacrifice; so that “the people, when they saw it, fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord he is the God, the Lord he is the God.”

And so it was with St. Paul and his brethren. In all their afflictions and persecutions, they had “for a helmet, the hope of salvation,” and were enabled to rejoice in “the assurance of this hope unto the end.”

Yet even this hope needs a foundation. Why may it not, like other hopes, deceive? As the scoffers said, “Where is the promise of his coming?”⁷

This likewise has an answer. Hope maketh not ashamed, because *the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*. In that love towards God which fills our hearts, being poured into them by his Spirit, we have an earnest

⁶ 1 Kings xviii.

⁷ 2 Pet. iii. 4.

of all that we expect and look for. That love of God is his gift—his best gift: possessing that, we possess a part of what he has promised; and the possession of a part now gives assurance that we shall enjoy the whole hereafter.

There is a passage in St. Paul's life, which shows us the whole of this process, and illustrates his meaning by example: why he *glories even in tribulations*. He and Silas were brought before the magistrates at Philippi, and after suffering many stripes, were cast “into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks.”⁸ This was *tribulation*: but tribulation endured with *patience*: with patience which nothing could produce but a stedfast faith thus tried and proved. Such *experience* gave just ground of *hope*, that their “light affliction which was but for a moment, should work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” But as hope often flatters to deceive, why might not their expectations be delusive, and they, after all, *ashamed*, “disappointed of their hope?” Because they had a present proof of the certainty of God's promises, and the faithfulness of his word: a proof they could not doubt of, for it was in themselves; they had an inward consciousness of its reality. *The love of God was so shed abroad in their hearts*, that instead of complaining and mourning, they “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” And so strong was this feeling, that “at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” Certainly this could be no natural feeling.

⁸ Acts xvi. 22—24.

The natural feeling would be to dislike and desert a cause, which had brought them into trouble. But instead of thus being ashamed of their cause, they were “filled with joy and peace through the power of the Holy Ghost.” This must be the work of God upon their hearts. And therefore he concludes, that their hope was no delusion. Its justness was proved, as surely as the reality of life is proved by the existence of warmth or motion. *Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Well worthy to be observed is the caution of St. Paul, in all that concerns that vast object, the salvation of the soul. He takes nothing for granted. He feels his way (so we may express it) at every step.

We glory in tribulation. So he says. But not out of a vague conceit, that they who in this world have “had evil things,” must be recompensed in another: but because tribulation serves to prepare him for happiness, and to show his meetness for it. He “rejoices in hope:” but his hope must have a foundation too: it must be confirmed by the Spirit of God shedding its influence upon the heart, and “witnessing with his spirit” that he is one of God’s children; for it is God who has inspired him with filial love, and enables him, from the midst of his tribulation, to cry, “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”⁹

So it ought to be, in all that concerns the soul. We ought not to be content, in regard to our everlasting inheritance, unless we know our title-deeds, and are sure that they are valid.

⁹ Ps. cxix. 75.

LECTURE XIII.

THE MERCY OF GOD IN THE ATONEMENT, AN ARGUMENT FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF HIS MERCY TO THE END.

ROMANS V. 6—11.

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

The object of St. Paul here, is to inspire the disciples with confidence. Confidence, not in themselves, but in the divine mercy. This confidence is needful, both for comfort and for persevering exertion. And the ground which he takes for their encouragement, is the surest of all grounds: the goodness which God has already shown. See how he has proved this: how he has given evidence of good-will towards men. For what was their state? The state of the heathen, who had “not liked to retain him in their knowledge,” and were worshipping, instead of Him, the works which their own hands had made? The state of the Jews, his own people; who had indeed the “form of godliness” among them, but none of its “power?” Yet such was the world which God so pitied, as to provide the means by which it might be “reconciled to himself.” If indeed it had been otherwise: if the heathen had been trying to “find God,” through the glimpses which were given them: had they acted up to their conscience, and the light

of reason: had there been anything like a general desire, however faint, to learn more of Him, “in whom they had their being;” we might have wondered less that God should visit his people: should set up a light, a “sun of righteousness,” for those who were mourning over the darkness of their ways and of their hearts. But though it was not so;—*when we were yet without strength*,—alienated from the only source of strength,—God fulfilled his appointed purpose: *in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Learn from this, says the apostle, the assurance of God’s favour. If he opened a door of reconciliation, when there was no movement on man’s part: much more are we sure that he will turn away from none who, encouraged by his offer and cheered by his invitation, are looking towards his kingdom. If *when enemies* he made a way for sinners to approach him, how certain is it that he will meet them when they are so approaching, and receive them, and protect them to the end! If when the prodigal was ungrateful and undutiful the father still retained his love for him, and brought him to his senses: that same father would not neglect him when reconciled: would not cast him out, or expose him again to the evils from which he had taken pains to recover him. The more we reflect on the extent of God’s mercy, the surer this confidence appears.

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

8. *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

9. *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Thus Paul continues his argument, that none may faint, or be “weary in well-doing.” If Christ showed such compassion for us, if God so commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, alienated and estranged from him both in heart and life, *Christ died for us; how much more* will he use his grace and power now, to save those unto the end whom he has justified and reconciled to God!

Christ suffered, to pay our ransom. As many as claim by faith the benefit of that redemption, are *reconciled to God by the death of his Son; justified by his blood.* Being by nature children of wrath, they are hereby made the children of grace.

But between reconciliation and salvation, there is an interval. And one who trusts in Christ for remission of sins past, may yet be in perplexity when he thinks of the enemies which stand between him and heaven. The world and its temptations: the flesh and its weakness: the devil and his snares, may fill him with fear and trembling. To cheer and encourage such, comes the argument of the apostle. *Much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* Saved by his life. For he who “was in the beginning with God, and was God,” “ever liveth at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for

us :”¹ is our “advocate with the Father :”² “prays for us, that our faith fail not :” that we may be “kept from the evil :”³ and thus, “is able to save them unto the uttermost that come unto God through him.”⁴

Thus faith in a crucified Saviour, leads to faith in a risen Saviour. He who has given the strongest proof, that he willeth not that any should perish ; he who has done so much, that they may not perish ; will he now abandon the work, and leave the cause which he has carried so far ? Will he desert the soul for which he shed his precious blood ? We know that he will not. Those whom he so loved as to die for them on the cross, he will still love, now that he “is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high :” he will “love unto the end.” It is the same confidence that we might feel in an earthly benefactor. He forgave me, and showed kindness, when I treated him with coldness and aversion : he remained my friend, and visited and relieved me in the afflictions which my own misconduct had brought on : *how much more* am I sure of his assistance and regard, when I am striving to deserve it, and to make some due return ? So, respecting God, the penitent may argue ;—He visited me, when I neglected him : will he abandon me now that I desire to serve him ? He stopped me when I was a rebel : will he reject me when I strive after obedience ? He thought of me when I deserted him : will he neglect me when I pray to him ? when all my joy is in his word and his promise, and in his covenant of grace ?

¹ Rom. viii. 34 ; Heb. vii. 25.

² 1 John ii. 1.

³ Luke xxii. 31 ; John xvii. 15.

⁴ Heb. vii. 25.

These are the thoughts by which those hearts may be encouraged, which need encouragement: those spirits cheered, which faint under the dangers of the world, and the sense of remaining corruption. And such thoughts enable us to *joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* That atonement, which *we have received*, is the earnest of the rest: the standing proof of God's good will, to disperse all doubts and fears. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”⁵

LECTURE XIV.

THE RUIN OF MANKIND THROUGH ADAM : THEIR RESTORATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

ROMANS v. 12—17.

12. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

The fact here revealed to us, God alone could reveal. He does not explain it to us: how or why it came to be so, we are not told: he merely declares the fact, that he “made man upright,”¹ and man became corrupt through disobedience: that he surveyed his works, and “lo, they were very good,”² and man amongst them: till *sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* He had issued a command, and required obedience of the creatures he had

⁵ Rom. viii. 32. ¹ Eccles. vii. 29. ² Gen. i. 31.

made ; “saying, (Gen. ii. 16,) Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it ; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” When this command was disobeyed, *sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* (Gen. iii. 17.) “Because thou hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it : cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”³

And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. All became sinful, as the descendants of sinful parents, and therefore all became subject to the consequences of sin. Adam’s sons were born “in his likeness,” corrupt like himself: and the whole race lies under the evils which were thus entailed upon the world.

All have sinned, the apostle had said. He might be challenged to prove this. He had before shown it, in the opening of this epistle, from their history. He now takes another course: and argues that *all have sinned*, because all have suffered the effects of sin.

13. (*For until (i. e. before) the law,⁴ sin was in the world : but sin is not imputed when there is no law :*

³ Gen. iii. 19.

⁴ *ἀχριτοῦ*, before, or up to the time of the law of Moses: so Chrysostom. Though no law was then revealed to men, as afterwards to the Jews, there was the natural law of reason and conscience written in their hearts, and this they did not obey : as ch. i. and ii.

14. *Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*⁵

Thus we have proof of the sinfulness of the whole race, in that all underwent the penalty of sinfulness. *Death reigned from Adam to Moses.* Those died, who could not have transgressed the command which Adam disobeyed, or the law which Moses issued, and therefore did not suffer for that sin. But there was a law, an unwritten law of reason and of conscience, against which they offended: otherwise sin would not have been imputed to them. *For sin is not imputed where there is no law.* And punishment is not inflicted, where there is no sin. But sin was imputed to them, and they suffered its penalty: and therefore *all have sinned*, though not *after the similitude of Adam's transgression*: not wilfully against a direct command. Plainly, therefore, the whole race had partaken of the corruption which Adam introduced into the world: *and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

Here then is our condition: a miserable condition of physical infirmity, and spiritual ruin. “In Adam all died.”

Yet in his judgment, God remembers mercy. The goodness of God had been Paul’s special theme in the preceding verses of this chapter. The admission of sin and death into the world, might seem to contradict this. Therefore, whilst he asserts the offence

⁵ The *figure*, or type; $\tauύπος$. There is this parallel between them, that vast consequences resulted to the world from both.

and the condemnation; he asserts also the mercy of God, and the *gift by grace which is in Jesus Christ*. We acknowledge that the sin of the father, Adam, has fallen in its effects upon his whole posterity. Still observe God's goodness. If those sin, and suffer for sin, who sin through a corrupt nature, which nature they received corrupt: so likewise is righteousness imputed, through the mercy of the gospel, to those who have not been previously righteous: nay, have been offenders. And in this respect, Adam, who transgressed, *is the figure of him who was to come*. For as by him all suffered loss, by the other all received a gain—received it under such circumstances, as show that in God's counsels, “mercy rejoiceth against judgment:” and that although he is a God of holiness, who “will by no means clear the guilty,”⁶ yet “the Lord our God is merciful and gracious,” and “keepeth not his anger for ever.”⁷

15. *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

The loss was grievous, when *through the offence of one* ruin came upon *many*, upon all mankind: natural and spiritual ruin. But the favour of God and the benefits by grace have also *abounded unto many*: unto mankind. And as the injury was by one man, Adam; so likewise the remedy is *by one man, Jesus Christ*. Further, great is the difference between the gift by which mankind are benefited for the sake of one, and the sentence by which mankind were condemned

⁶ Exod. xxiv. 7.

⁷ Ps. ciii. 9.

by means of one. In the one case, many offences are remitted : in the other, one offence condemned.

16. And not as it was by one⁸ that sinned, so is the gift : for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.⁹

17. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one ; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

True, by one man's offence death reigned over the world ; mankind was involved in ruin. Still, knowing as we do the mercy of God, much more certain is it that they who embrace the offer of abundant grace and the free gift of righteousness, shall be preserved and live eternally by one, Jesus Christ : that if death reigned over all, through Adam, through the Son of God they who trust in him shall reign victorious over death for ever.

Thus we may derive confidence from the very calamity in which we are involved. When through the offence of one many were dead, then our natural state has been so pitied, that God has actively exerted himself for our deliverance. And the Deliverer is his own dear Son ; through whom the gift by grace has abounded unto many.

A comfort therefore belongs to us, which may appear greater through example. It did not, for instance, belong to the prodigal in the parable. In that distress to which he had been reduced by departing from his father's house, the prodigal reflected within himself on the happiness which he had left,

⁸ One offence.

⁹ Pardons and justifies from many sins.

and determined to return. But he had no promise of favour; no invitation: the father had not sent “the elder son” to reclaim him and say, Retract your steps and “be reconciled to” our father. This God has done for us: and therefore, nothing doubting, we may “come boldly to the throne of grace,” and seek for ourselves the promised *gift of righteousness*. If God had willed our destruction, he would have left us in our misery: but since he has not left us in our misery, but made a way for our deliverance, he does not will our destruction, but our salvation.

LECTURE XV.

THE CONDEMNATION OF MANKIND THROUGH THE JUDGMENT OF GOD, COMPARED WITH HIS MERCY IN THEIR SALVATION.

ROMANS v. 18—21.

18. *Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

19. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

We may here introduce what St. Paul says on this subject later in his epistle. “Behold the goodness, and the severity of God.”¹ On them that

¹ xi. 22.

offend, severity. *By the offence of one, or by one offence,² judgment came upon all men to condemnation.* This can neither be concealed nor denied: and it shows us, what men are so prone to disbelieve, the certainty of God's judgments. He issued his command to the man whom he had created, and said; “In the day when thou transgressest the command, thou shalt surely die.” Adam disbelieved, and did transgress. Immediately was the sentence executed. *Sin entered into the world, and with sin death:* death, and all that leads to death;—so that every eye we close and every grave we stand by, nay, every pang we witness and every tear we shed, are proofs to assure us of the fact, that “the transgression of the law is sin,” and that he who has given the law, will avenge the law; for “the wages of sin is death.”

Here, however, we must not stop. The Scripture does not stop here. St. Paul does not stop here, because God has not stopped here. We are led on, from the example of this severity, to admire the goodness of God in the dispensation of the Gospel. He has followed the same rule in mercy as in judgment. By Adam's disobedience evil came upon the whole world of sinful men. By the obedience of Christ a blessing is proposed to all. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,” and exempting from condemnation all that “repent and believe the Gospel.” The effects of Adam's disobedience will not be fatal to them, unless they themselves continue disobedient. To as many as are conscious of these effects, and sorrowing for

² ἢ εἴροι παραπτωμάτος.

them: to as many as feel themselves to be labouring and heavy laden, labouring under the yoke of a corrupt nature, and heavy laden with the burthen of sin: to all such is the mercy offered, the invitation of Christ proposed; “Come unto me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” For God willeth not the death of a sinner. “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?”³

This mercy must be man’s sole dependence. The more he knows or learns of the divine law, the more he will discover his own failings and short comings. This was seen, when God revealed his will by Moses to the Jews.

20. *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*

As was before shown, “until,” i. e. before “the law, sin was in the world.” When God’s revealed *law entered*, and was delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, it showed the extent of man’s corruption more and more. The law not only did not remedy, it even aggravated the disease.⁴ You might suppose it given for the very purpose *that offence might abound*; so generally did sin prevail in opposing the divine law: so heinous did man’s character appear, compared with the rule which God had given to direct him. But yet, God’s grace was not then restrained. If sin was more manifest, so too was God’s mercy more manifest, in providing a way of recovery from that sin.

³ Ezek. xviii. 23.

⁴ Chrysostom.

21. *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Sin hath reigned unto death. This brings our case particularly home; describes the circumstances in which we stand. For so we might each of us reason with ourselves. *The judgment of God came upon all men.* I feel it in myself: in “the sin which is in my members:” in the sentence of death under which I live. But is there no hope? no way of escape? No “city of refuge,” to which I may flee and be secure? The same Scripture, which tells me that by *the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation,* tells me also, that *by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* So that if *sin hath reigned unto death, even so may grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* In this way then there is escape. By trusting to the righteousness of Christ, I may be accounted righteous in God’s sight: nay, be admitted into his family, and by adoption reckoned among his children.

This then is the rock on which we should lay hold, and so cling to it as never to be shaken off. There is a deluge by which the world is overwhelmed, a deluge of sin and death; and its effects extend to all. Our business is not, to inquire how the waters should so prevail over the earth; but to seize upon the way of safety: to take refuge in the ark, which he himself has provided who rules the deluge. In thus offering the means of preservation, God has shown that he has a design of mercy. That is done for mankind, to which the Psalmist trusts, and in which

confidence he rejoices. God “ shall send from on high to fetch me, and take me out of many waters.”⁵ Our wisdom is, to profit by that mercy. We may be thankful that there is room for mercy where there is so much reason for judgment: that our offences, which are many, may still be blotted out: that if there is a *sentence of condemnation*, there is also a *gift of righteousness*: and that if there is here a world of sin and death, there is also a world where sin and death shall be no more, and where they who have accepted God’s *abounding grace*, shall reign in a life of holiness and happiness for ever.

LECTURE XVI.

BAPTISM, A DEATH UNTO SIN, AND A NEW BIRTH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

ROMANS vi. 1—11.

1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*
2. *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

The mercy of God is exercised in the salvation of sinners. So Paul had said. “ Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Therefore, some might say, the more sin, the more mercy. Why should we trouble ourselves to oppose the evil incli-

⁵ Ps. xviii. 16.

nations of the heart, which after all only open a way for the clearer manifestations of God's grace ?

These thoughts will arise ; but must be checked at once. One who had been relieved from urgent distress by another's bounty, might make a like pretext for future indolence. Why should I harass myself by self-exertion, when my wants furnish occasion to benevolence ? I should never have known the kindness of my friend, if I had not so greatly needed his assistance. This is the reasoning of nature, but of corrupt nature. The benevolence is employed, that the man who has been relieved by it may have free scope for his own industry. The sinner is pardoned, that he may abandon sin, and become the servant of God. Such is the purport of the covenant of grace, into which the Christian enters. It is a surrender of sin to death : like that surrender of his body unto death which Christ made. *How then shall we, who by that surrender are dead unto sin, live any longer therein ?* It would contradict the very purpose and meaning of our baptism.

3. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ?*

4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

So that baptism implies the abandonment of sin. For we are baptized into a religion founded on the death of Christ for sin. And our baptism into such a faith, may be likened to the death and burial of our sinful nature ; to be followed, as his death and burial were followed, by a resurrection to a better nature.

He, when all was finished, and he gave up the ghost, laid aside the weak and mortal flesh which he had assumed, *was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father*, and put on a glorious body which is neither weak nor mortal. And so it is designed that we, being *baptized into his death*, should lay aside the corrupt nature, and rise again to another nature, and *walk in newness of life* according to it. Therefore to *continue in sin, that grace might abound*, would violate the covenant through which grace is given ; Christ's death would become vain, and our baptism also vain. We could have no part or lot in its privileges.

5. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection :*

6. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

7. *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

8. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him :*

9. *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him.*

10. *For in that he died, he died unto sin once : but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

11. *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Naturally, the soul is dead to God, and alive to sin. This state must be reversed, and the soul become *dead to sin, and alive to God*. Such was the purpose of our restoration. He that is *buried with Christ by baptism into death*, is *freed from sin*, as one dead is freed from every yoke which formerly he used to

bear: *that henceforth he should not serve sin*; and instead of such slavery, enter into that service which is perfect freedom. This, however, is a change of nature. The natural course is to *serve sin*, and be dead to God. Those are happy, who cannot interpret the phrase by their own experience: who cannot remember the time when God was as little to them, as if they had been dead; as if they had no duty towards him, no reverence to pay, no laws to observe. The day which he has hallowed returned, but caused no emotion: his word made no impression: his commands and his promises affected them no more, than if they had not belonged to a world which he created. We know, that this is the case with multitudes, even in a land where God has revealed himself and is publicly acknowledged as “our Father which is in heaven.” Should any one propose what might please God, honour God, promote his service or glorify him in the world, they are *dead* to such a proposal. It has no more power to affect or move their heart, than if the heart were cold in the grave. But to sin they are *alive*. An opportunity of sin does move their heart. Their ears listen to it, their eyes perceive it from afar. Their mouth consents to it. Their feet, their hands, are ready to practise it. In short, the whole man is evidently *alive* to it.

With the Christian, it must be just otherwise. *Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* He must be *dead to sin*. He must have renounced all love of it, all practice of it, all concern with it, as much as one who is no longer in a sinful world. He must “make a covenant with his eyes,” that they

look not on the thing that is unlawful. He must watch over his heart, that “when sinners entice him,” he may not “consent” unto them. He must “keep his tongue from evil, and his lips, that they speak no guile.” He must “mortify the flesh, with the affections and lusts.” The “world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world.”

But in proportion as he is “dead to sin, he is *alive unto God*.” Experience shows us equally, what this means. It is to see things in the world, not as they might gratify the senses, or flatter the inclination, but as God teaches us to see them. It is to be living to his service and his glory. It is to feel towards Him and his will, what the parent feels towards his family, what the patriot feels for his country. Is God offended? Is his day profaned? Is his name blasphemed? This affects a Christian, as an injury committed against himself would affect him. Then, on the other hand, if any means appear by which the honour of God may be promoted, or his commands obeyed; means by which some who serve him not may be brought to serve him, means by which the wicked may be led to repentance, and the ignorant and careless to “faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ”—the opportunity is gladly seized. The man, in short, is as much alive to the will of God, as the children of this world are alive to their temporal interests; and his purpose is, through all the concerns of life, to carry into practice the apostle’s maxim, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

These are the outward signs by which it will be seen that a man is *alive unto God*. But there is much which cannot be described or explained. There

is the inward witness of the conscience; what St. Paul felt when he said, “The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God:”¹ what he meant when he said, “We thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.”² It is like, in this respect, our bodily life. Who can say, what it is, what it depends on? But this we know, that we have in ourselves the power of thinking and of moving. So with respect to life *unto God*. We know, we feel that we live to him: that He is in all our thoughts, and all our actions; the desire of our hearts, and the purpose of our lives is to glorify him on earth, and to finish the work which he hath given us to do.

This is the state of heart which must be the Christian’s standard: without which he has “not attained, neither is already perfect.” They are the terms of the covenant to which he is engaged. In order that he may *live with Christ* above, he must be *dead with Christ* below: sin must have no more dominion over him, as *death had no more dominion over Christ*, after that he had once paid the satisfaction to God’s justice. *Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* And the service which sin has not, God must have; there must be a living, active, intelligent obedience to Him who claims it, and has a right to it: and it must be felt in our hearts within, and evidenced outwardly by our lives, that we are *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² 2 Cor. v. 15.

LECTURE XVII.

THE TYRANNY OF SIN FROM WHICH THE CHRISTIAN IS DELIVERED.

ROMANS vi. 12—17.

12. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

13. *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

St. Paul had before used the example of death, and resurrection from death, to show how the Christian is recovered from sin, and devoted to God. He now uses another figure: that of power, rule, dominion. The Christian enters into God's service, and is freed from the tyranny of sin. *Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

If any should argue, How can this be, when sin is our natural master, and the "law in our members brings us into captivity?" There is still an answer: *Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Ye are not under the law alone, which gave commandment,

but gave not power: *ye are under grace*; the promise of the Gospel is, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”¹ So that “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,” is accomplished by the “grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.”²

Nature, however, is not easily subdued. Some might catch at the words, *We are not under the law, but under grace*; and ask, perverting their meaning, Why then need we be so strict and careful against “the motions of sin which are in our members?” To whom he answers:

15. *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

Ye were baptized, as has been already shown, *into the death of Christ*. It is the basis of your faith, that he “gave his life a ransom,” to redeem you from sin, and from the consequences of sin. But ye are not redeemed from sin, if ye continue to serve sin.

16. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

Sin is here called a master, and said to rule. Yet some might ask, What is sin, which is here treated as a person? What is it but a name?

Sin is that principle within us, in which the corruption of our fallen nature consists: that principle which is opposed to what is right, and, being right,

¹ Jer. xxxi. 33, compared with Heb. viii. 10.

² Ch. viii. 3; John i. 17.

is required of God. It appears in various forms: and in all those forms it rules. Pride is sin; and the vain, haughty, self-conceited man is the servant of pride. Malice is sin: and the envious, slanderous, revengeful man is the servant of malice. Covetousness is sin: and the dishonest, hard-hearted, extortionate man is ruled by covetousness. Intemperance is sin: and the man who indulges any of the bodily appetites beyond the rules which God prescribes, is the slave of intemperance.

And we may see, by a few examples, how just the term is: how properly sin may be termed a master whom men obey and serve.

Sin acted as a master over Joseph's brethren, at the time when they resolved, first, to kill him, and afterwards sold him as a slave to the travelling merchants who were providentially passing by.³ Joseph was advancing towards them. "And they said one to another: Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come, let us slay him." What urged them to such a purpose? Envy, hatred, malice. Joseph was a better son than themselves, and therefore their father loved him better. God had intimated to him by a prophetic dream, that he should hereafter be lord over his brethren. Therefore "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." And these feelings mastered them, governed them. When opportunity was given, envy, hatred rise up in their hearts, and issue a command: "Now slay this dreamer." They obeyed the impulse, though God had given a contrary command, and declared, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." They

³ Gen. xxxvii. 18—20.

despised the command of God, and followed the command of sin. *And his servants ye are, whom ye obey.*

Again, sin acted as a master over Gehazi, the servant of Elisha.⁴ His sin was of another form; took the shape of covetousness. His master the prophet had been enabled to cure the Syrian officer Naaman of his leprosy. Naaman would have loaded him with valuable gifts in return. But Elisha was the *servant of righteousness*, and would receive none. Then it was that Gehazi's real master, the ruler of his heart, awoke as it were, and gave his orders. Now, Gehazi, is your opportunity. The prophet has spared Naaman, who would gladly have enriched him. Do you run after him, and take something from him. Gehazi willingly obeyed: and under false pretences carried back with him "two talents of silver, and two changes of garments:" took them up privately, and "bestowed them in the house." What was this, but to be the slave of covetousness? *His servants ye are, whom ye obey.*

The case of Pilate supplies another example. His ruler was ambition; love of popular favour, and worldly advancement. He saw the innocence of the Lord Jesus, who was brought before him. He was anxious "to release him." His understanding showed him that the Jews were accusing Jesus out of envy: and his conscience warned him, that he ought to "have nothing to do with that just man:" not to be the instrument of Jewish malice.⁵ Had he followed the dictates of his conscience, he would have set Jesus free. But just as he was on the point of dis-

⁴ 2 Kings v. 20—27.

⁵ John xvii. 18; xviii. 1—16.

charging him, his master ambition came in, and said, by the mouth of the Jews, “ If thou lettest this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend.” Thou wilt lose thy credit at court : perhaps forfeit thy present government: certainly not obtain a better. So when Pilate heard these words, he heard them as a servant hears his master’s order: they were to him a command: and overcoming all sense of justice and duty, he “ delivered up Jesus to them to be crucified.”

Thus it is that sin acts as a master over those who yield to it: nay, as a master who will not give up his power. Some, perhaps, in a moment of penitence, in a season of conviction, may desire to escape from their bondage, and break their chains. But, ever and anon, the master returns: sets before them the temptation to which they have been used to yield, the pleasure, or the company, or the gain to which they have been long accustomed: and when he says, Enjoy this, and disregard the consequences,—they obey, for they are his servants, and his yoke is over them. How many of the victims of intemperance have resolved never again to taste the poison which is destroying them! How many a gamester has vowed that he will no more risk the ruin of his fortune, his family, and his peace! A few hours after, the master sin appears: bids him return to the place which he had determined to avoid, bids him rejoin the company which so lately he renounced ; says, “ as one having authority, Come, and he cometh ; go, and he goeth.” Such is the tyranny of sin: such the dominion under which he holds his captives: they cannot do the things which their conscience tells them should be done; and the things

they approve not in their inner mind, those they do : because their master fetters their will, and makes it agree with his own.

Such then, says St. Paul here, had been the case with those to whom he wrote.

17. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Ye were the servants of sin. Following the desires of the flesh and of the mind, ye had yielded yourselves to a dominion which is contrary to God and righteousness, and been “led captive by Satan at his will.” But it was to men in this unhappy state; it was because this was the helpless condition of the world, that Jesus Christ had come, to impose a new and a very different yoke upon them. And these Roman brethren had listened to the voice of the Deliverer: had been made free from their former master, and had now become the servants of God and of righteousness. *God be thanked, —ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* Ye have obeyed that doctrine which taught you how the Lord Jesus has laid down his life, that he might redeem to himself a people : free them from the service of sin, and bring them to God. So that now *sin has no more dominion over you.* He may issue his command, and say, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes.”⁶— Sin may urge this; but urge in vain. Ye have chosen another master, who has said, “Mortify your mem-

⁶ Eccles. xi. 19.

bers which are upon earth :”⁷ for “ know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” Ambition may try its power with you, and say, Come, make to thyself a name. Seek wealth, seek honour, seek to be spoken well of. But ye have another master, even God : and he warns you, “ Whosoever ⁸will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God.” Covetousness may put in its claim, and give some tempting reason why ye should enrich yourselves, and disregard the interests of others. But ye are *made free* from the power of such temptations, and become *servants to God* : and the maxim of his family is, “ What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul !”

This is the answer to that question which corrupt nature is too ready to ask : May we not continue in sin, since *we are not under the law, but under grace ?* It would frustrate all God’s purposes. He has “ redeemed us from all iniquity,” that we might *yield ourselves unto God*. But “ whoso committeth sin, is the servant of sin,” still under the yoke, for which the Son of God came to “ make him free.” *For his servants ye are, whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.*

⁷ Col. iii. 3 ; Eccles. xi. 19.

⁸ βούληθη. James iv. 4.

LECTURE XVIII.

THE SERVICE AND THE RECOMPENSE OF SIN AND
OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

ROMANS vi. 18—23.

18. *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

19. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

20. *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

The example which St. Paul uses here was familiar to the persons whom he addresses; and he takes it for that reason, *because of the infirmity of their flesh*; which needed example, to the better perceiving of the truth. They knew the nature of bondage, and of freedom. The man who is bound to his owner, to come or go at his bidding, is his slave. And the man who *yields up his members to iniquity*, is in the same manner a slave to sin. Sin issues his command: bids him indulge this or that desire, follow this or that appetite; and he obeys. And such had been the case with these Roman Christians. They had been *the servants of sin, and free from righteousness*: not bound by that law which is the only real

freedom. One, perhaps, a slave to covetousness. Another, to intemperance, sensual appetite. Another, to ambition. Another, to malice. Perhaps several of these masters had joined, to rule over one unhappy soul. In some way or other they had been *free from righteousness*, and “led captive by Satan at his will.”

But as one who has been a slave, or made a slave, may be ransomed and set free, such were these now. *Being made free from sin*, ye have taken on yourselves another service. Ye were not made free from one master, that ye might act without restraint or rule: but ye became *free from sin*, that ye might *become the servants of righteousness*.

And now again Paul speaks after the manner of men. Men, when they enter into service, look for a return. He asks, what return they had received.

21. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

22. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

23. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Truly, *the wages of sin*, even in this life, are poor wages. Ask the covetous, self-seeking, money-loving man, what his sin has given him? He will answer, if he speak sincerely,—restless nights, and disappointed days. Ask the revengeful, malicious, envious hater of his neighbour, what he has enjoyed;—a heart “like the troubled sea.” Ask the intemperate, the impious, the sensual, the reveller, what their sin

has brought ;—a wretched family : a name of reproach : a ruined fortune : a broken constitution. These earthly consequences of sin are the earnest (so to speak) now given, to testify the will of God, and prove the nature of his government. For these effects of sin are his appointment: he has so ordered the world, that ungodliness has no promise in the present life, any more than in that which is to come. But the sure and settled *wages of sin, is death*, eternal death ; all that Scripture comprises in that term ; all that is included in the sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

From the service of sin, and therefore from death, the wages of that service, these Roman Christians had been delivered. *Now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* For as the wages of sin is death ; so, on the other hand, the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The cases, we observe, are not the same. Death is the wages of sin : that which it has deserved or procured. Everlasting life can never be wages ; for man can never earn or merit it : but it is the gift of God : the free gift of God, reserved in heaven for those, who, “being justified by faith, have peace with Him, through Jesus Christ ;” and “who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.” For them God has prepared a gift, beyond what we can either desire or deserve ; even life eternal.

The argument of the chapter is, that there are two opposite services, and two different masters, to one of which every individual must be engaged. Every one must be either yielding to the dominion of sin, or desiring to serve God and righteousness.

This does not imply, that a man may have made a settled agreement to serve sin, or entered into a regular compact with Satan. No one must feel satisfied with his state, merely because this cannot be charged against him. We too naturally slide into that service; and the danger is lest we go unthinking on till escape is hopeless, and then vainly wish that we had served God as faithfully as we have been serving sin. Sin is our natural master: the burthen lies on us, to show that we have been delivered from it; just as one who has been born a slave must show the tokens of his freedom.

Now the Christian bears about him such a token. He has been *baptized into Jesus Christ*, that the *body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth he might not serve sin*. Let him be careful to show that sin has not retained its power, and kept dominion over him. We know how diligently a slave who has been once set free, preserves the certificate of his freedom. So must we all carry the evidence about us, that we continue stedfast in the covenant by which we are bound: and can exhibit not the christian name alone, but the christian faith and practice. We must keep so far from the opposite service, that all may see to which master we are engaged. All who know us should know us to be God's servants; who reverence his name; who keep his Sabbaths holy; who love the Book in which his commands are written; who

honour his people ; who labour to promote his cause, and bring others over to his service ; whose desire is, that “God in all things may be glorified,” and Jesus Christ become the universal lord.

So living, *ye have fruit unto holiness* : and “blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.”¹ “An entrance shall be ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”²

LECTURE XIX.

THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF MOSES.

ROMANS vii. 1—13.

1. *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth ?*

2. *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth ; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.*

3. *So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress : but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law ; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

¹ Matt. xxiv. 45.

² 2 Pet. ii. 11.

4. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ;¹ that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

This relates to the change which had now taken place in the state of the Jewish people, which the apostle compares to the change which death makes in the state of married persons. The law given by Moses had bound them under obligations like those to which a woman is bound so long as her husband liveth. So long, but no longer. And now the law had ceased to exist, and therefore they were *loosed from the law*. It was to last but for a time; till he came for whom it prepared the way: till he came of whom its ordinances were a type and shadow. And so, by the *body of Christ* crucified, and fulfilling the law, the law had, as it were, expired, and they were free from it. They were *dead to the law*: like a woman who is dead to her first vows, they have no more power over her; neither had their former obligations to the law any more power over the Jewish people; still less over the Jewish converts; who were *married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that they should bring forth fruit unto God.*

It had not been always so. They had not always *brought forth fruit unto God.*

5. *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.*

¹ By all that which Christ did and suffered for us in the body.—Stafford.

6. *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

The motions of sin, which were by the law, the passions which the law condemned, and showed to be sinful²—these kept us in a miserable state: the law commanded, and gave no power; and the fruits we brought forth, were not “fruits of the Spirit,” but of the flesh.

The Gospel delivers from this bondage. That which held us, is as it were dead, and can enthrall us no longer: so that being freed from the letter of the law, we serve God in newness of spirit, not as slaves but as children. For “the letter killeth.” The strict exactness of the law must bring condemnation with it. “But the Spirit giveth life.” Warmed and animated by filial love, we present ourselves, our souls and bodies, in free and reasonable obedience to his will. This was Paul’s own feeling, as appears throughout his epistles. He “lived no longer to himself, but to him who died for him.”³

Still he was by birth a Jew, and many of those to whom he wrote had the sentiments of Jews. Moreover “the law came by Moses,” and was the law of God. He must guard against misconception.

7. *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbids. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

Do I then seem to be disparaging the law, and to speak slightly of it? This is far from my intention.

² So Chrysostom: who supplies φανερούμενα, νωρησμένα.

³ 2 Cor. v. 14.

If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law. Nay, I have to thank the law, for giving me a knowledge of sin, and a sense of duty which I should not otherwise have attained.⁴ Without the law, *I had not known lust*; I had not known the sinful nature of vehement, unregulated desire.⁵

Still this law, though showing what sin was, could not prevent sin. Nay, its very prohibitions inflamed the desires which they were intended to restrain. The evil disposition made the law a source of transgression.

8. *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.*

9. *For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived,⁶ and I died.*

10. *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.*

11. *For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*

Without the law—till the law, by showing what was right, showed also what was wrong—*sin was dead*; it did not put forth its strength; not because it did not exist, but because it did not exert itself: like a serpent in a dormant state, it seemed to have no power. For till I became, through the law, acquainted with the extent and true nature of holiness,

⁴ νομος ἀμαρτιας κατηγορος.—Theod.

⁵ Becoming more violent because of contradiction. ἀμαρτια, η ἐπι το χειρον ὄρμη. Theoph.

⁶ ἐφανη ἀμαρτια. Ib.

I was alive, I thought my state to be a lively flourishing state. But when the commandment came and reached my conscience, sin, that had been dead, revived, showed its nature, and its power; and I that had been alive, now died; felt myself “ guilty of death.” The law which would have been life to me if I had fulfilled it, became death to me because I had transgressed it. For sinful nature, taking occasion by the commandment, averse to the strictness of the law, deceived me into various transgressions, and so increased my condemnation.

12. *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

13. *Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*⁷

The malignity of the disorder is then most clearly seen, when the skill which is used to cure it fails.

⁷ It is satisfactory to know how a sentence of so much difficulty as this and the eighth verse presents, was interpreted in the earlier ages of the church. Chrysostom's commentary is as follows. “ Sin, taking occasion, increased evil desire, ἐπιθυμίαν, and the contrary took place to that which was the intent of the law: not from the fault, but the weakness of the law. For when we desire a thing, and are prevented from possessing it, the ardour of desire is more enkindled: but this is not by the law. For that forbade the being hurried away by desire. But sin, i. e. our weakness and bad disposition, used the good to produce evil. The physician is not to be accused for this: but the patient who makes an ill use of the medicine. For the law was not ordained to inflame desire, but to extinguish it. The contrary has occurred; this is not the law's fault, but ours.”—Ad. Rom. Hom. xii.

But the fault is in the constitution, not in the physician. The perfect standard condemns what does not come up to it, or agree with it: but the standard is right, the work wrong: though the wrong might not appear unless the standard discovered it. The standard shows the greatness of the error: as the magnifying glass betrays the defects of the surface: as the strong light discloses the motes and atoms in the air.

Here then is the conclusion. *The law is holy*, and “the commandment holy, and just, and good.” He would be a happy man, who should live according to all the things that are written in the law to do them. And he alone is in a safe state, who makes this law the mark to which he is constantly pressing forward. But we have “not attained, neither are already perfect.” So far from it, “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” When the commandment comes, we perceive from it, not how correct our course has been, but how far we have deviated from the line prescribed.

See then, says the apostle, why I rejoice that you are *delivered from the law* by the death of Christ; that you are no longer connected with it as the ground of your everlasting life. For what says the law? “This is the first and great commandment. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy soul, and all thy strength. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁷ Tried by this law, who shall stand? What man living shall be justified? Here, then, in

⁷ Matt. xxii. 38.

this mirror, I behold the exceeding sinfulness of my nature, and learn to thank God, that “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us:”⁸ that he will judge me, not “according to my own righteousness which is of the law,” but according to “the faith of Christ:”⁹ through whom I trust to be absolved from those omissions and transgressions by which, according to the letter of the law, I must be condemned. “For the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” “And by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”¹

LECTURE XX.

ROMANS vii. 14—25.

THE BONDAGE OF MAN UNDER SIN: AND HIS DELIVERANCE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

14. *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

15. *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I.*

16. *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

17. *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

⁸ Tit. iii. 3.

⁹ Phil. iii. 9.

¹ John i. 17; Acts xiii. 39.

18. *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

19. *For the good that I would I do not ; but the evil that I would not, that I do.*

20. *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

Such must be the feelings of the awakened mind, trying to make out a title to salvation through obedience to the law, but foiled at every step. The apostle's object from the beginning of the chapter is to show the blessedness of being *delivered from the law* : and here he describes the perplexity of one not so delivered. He would say, *The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin* : betrayed by my first parent, and enslaved to Satan through the corruption so brought upon my nature. *For that which I do I allow not* : God and my conscience forbid it : but my evil nature prevails against my conscience : *for what I would, that I do not ; but what I hate, that do I. I consent unto the law that it is good.* I agree with our own David when he says, “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”¹ *But how to perform that which is good I find not.* I have too often cause to say again with David, “I have sinned against the Lord.” “I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”²

These are very far from being the reflections of every sinner. Many understand little of God's law, and are not aware of the holiness which he requires. The Pharisees, who disputed against our Lord, be-

¹ Ps. xix. 8.

² Ps. li. 3.

cause he seemed to impute blame to them ; and answered him, saying, “ Are we blind also ? ”³—these were not persons to confess, *we are carnal, but the law is spiritual.* Still less are they the reflections of those who have practised sin till the conscience is seared : become callous, insensible, past feeling. These are the reflections of one who knows that the law is holy, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart : but who also perceives that in himself, *that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing :* and who also perceives that this sinfulness sets him at a distance from God ; for God requires holiness, and he is at present under the power of sin.

And why is he thus contradicting his better judgment? Because there is a principle within him, stronger than his conscience or his reason. *If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* I am constrained to act against myself : against my better part : I am under the dominion of an inward tyrant, who overpowers the conviction of my mind ; and this, without excusing my transgression, aggravates the misery of my state. My will is enslaved : and though in my inward man *I consent unto the law that it is good,* yet when temptation comes, it leads me away in despite of my reason and resolutions. Sin is too strong for me, causes me to do violence to my own convictions : *what I would, in my inward mind approving, that I do not, but what I hate, what my judgment disallows, that I do.*

These must be the feelings of one who is held by a law which he confesses to be *holy, and just, and good,* but *finds not how to perform it.* And thoughts like

³ John ix. 40.

these may be treated in various ways. They may be quieted by suggesting to the mind :—This is our case ; but it is the case with multitudes : why should we be uneasy ? They may be silenced by reflecting : *To will is present with me.* My heart therefore is good : and God will accept the will. Or it may seem enough to urge, *In me dwelleth no good thing :* I inherited a sinful nature ; and God will not call me into judgment for that which was born with me. If I am sinful, he is merciful.

St. Paul, however, is not so satisfied. He knew that not the hearers, not the approvers of the law would be justified before God, but the doers.⁴ If we are bound by the law, we must fulfil the law. And if we had no other hope than from the righteousness that is of the law, our condition would be nothing else than desperate. So he describes it.

21. *I find then a law,⁵ that when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

22. *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man :*

23. *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

24. *O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*

25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

I thank God, that through Jesus Christ there is deliverance from a state which would otherwise be a state of condemnation. Without him, if I look to my condition before God, it is but *a body of death.*

⁴ ii. 13.

⁵ A principle in my nature.

My original nature, before it is renewed by the Spirit of God, is *carnal, sold under sin*: quite incapable of fulfilling the requirements of a spiritual law. And even when we are “renewed in the spirit of our mind,” *the body of death* still clings to us and hangs about us. “The flesh is weak,” even if “the spirit is willing.” The tendency of the law in our members is still to *bring us into captivity*.⁵ “There is no man that liveth, and sinneth not;”⁶ so that there is no man living who can be justified by the works of the law. Therefore, *thanks be to God*, that as regards us, “the law is now dead whereby we are held.” “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” “By him we are justified from all things.” He “has redeemed us from the curse of the law.”⁷ So that although, to the end, the flesh will lust against the spirit: though *with the flesh I serve the law of sin*, even while *in the mind I serve the law of God*; still I thank God, that where sin abounds, “grace has still more abounded.” “Christ Jesus bore our sins in his own body;”⁸ and being “justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;” nay, “an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.”⁹

What then, it may be asked, are these the words of an apostle speaking of himself? Yes. He is thus led by the course of his argument to record his own experience: and to show the difference of his

⁵ Nothing more than this is necessarily to be inferred from the word *ἀγχυαλωτιζοντα*.

⁶ 1 Kings viii. 46.

⁷ Acts xiii. 39; Gal. iii. 13.

⁸ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

⁹ 2 Pet. i. 11.

state, under the law, and under the Gospel. *The law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.* Such was his original nature. “We ourselves,” as he says elsewhere, “were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”¹ A change had now been wrought: but the remainder of sin still maintains a harassing conflict within him. *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* No doubt Paul felt this: felt the tendency of his corrupt nature to prevail over the law of his mind; so that it was needful for him to “keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest whilst he preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away.”² And he describes his own feelings, his abiding hope and consolation, when he sees nothing in the law, but condemnation: and looks to “eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ.” For he “desired to be saved, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”³ to expect eternal life, not as a reward that might be claimed, but as a mercy to be thankfully received. Wretched man that he would be, if he had only himself to depend on, no confidence but in his own righteousness!

And thus describing the process of his feelings, he has given us a test by which we may try our own.

¹ Tit. iii. 3.

² 1 Cor. ix. 27.

³ Phil. iii. 9.

It is, indeed, one great benefit of St. Paul's writings, that he is led incidentally to show the effect upon his own mind and character of the doctrine which he was inculcating. The feelings here represented must be, in the main, the thoughts of every man who sets himself in earnest to the work of salvation. Every man must contend against the law of sin which is in his members. Every man must seek deliverance through the one name under heaven by which salvation is granted to man. Every man will discover to the end a principle in the flesh which *serves the law of sin*, though the mind *serves the law of God*. And this makes it needful at last as at first, to thank God, that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."*

LECTURE XXI.

THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF THOSE THAT ARE REDEEMED BY CHRIST JESUS.

ROMANS viii. 1—7.

1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

If a man were judged according to the letter of

* 1 John ii. 1.

the law delivered to the Jews by Moses, he must expect *condemnation*. So it had been proved. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” Or if a man looked to himself and his own nature, he must expect *condemnation*. For he would “see a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members.”

In order, then, to be free from *condemnation*, he must look elsewhere. And blessed be God, he would not look in vain. *There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk (are walking) not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Christ has borne the curse of the law for us, and sin is not imputed to them that are in him. He teaches, and he enables us, to *walk not after the flesh*; not to follow the corrupt nature which is contrary to the law of God; but to yield ourselves up to be led *by the Spirit*, which makes us partakers of the divine nature, and delivers us from the corruption of our birth. So that the “grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ,” *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has made us free from the law of sin and death.* The law which pardons sin, and provides for holiness, delivers us from the law which whilst it condemns us as sinners, yet leaves sin in all its power.

3. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

4. *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The law could *condemn sin*, in one sense; it could declare the penalty of sin. But in another most

important sense it could not *condemn sin*: it could not dethrone it from its seat in man's heart: could not abolish its power, *in that it was weak through the flesh*: a corrupt nature could not be thus sanctified. But *what the law could not do*, God had now done: *God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*: Christ by his sufferings in the body (for he "was made flesh"¹ for our sakes,) abolished the power of sin to destroy: and by the gift of the Holy Spirit enables man to resist and conquer it. And sin being thus *condemned*, put down, dethroned,—righteousness might succeed and prevail. Men are delivered from sin, *that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them*;² that the righteousness which the law requires, but could not secure, may be wrought in them by the Spirit overcoming their carnal nature, and bringing it into subjection to the will of God.

5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

6. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

By birth, we have a carnal nature. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh."³ The disciples of Christ receive a spiritual nature: "*That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.*" *They that are after the flesh, they*

¹ Heb. vii. 19. "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did: by the which we draw nigh unto God."

² *In them, not for them, as some have interpreted it.*

³ John iii. 6.

that remain in their sinful nature, *do mind the things of the flesh*; the things of this present world; what their natural inclinations lead them to. Like the rich man described in our Lord's parable; who having much goods laid up for many years, thought only how he might "take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry."⁴ Like Ananias, when he professed to sell his possessions, and devote the produce to the Christian cause, but did in truth keep back a part of the price for his own purposes.⁵ Like those among the chief priests and rulers, who believed in Jesus that he was the Christ, but "did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."⁶

These all, though in different directions, *minded the things of the flesh*. Whereas the spiritual mind renounces "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," and whatever is "not of the Father, but of the world."⁷ Like Moses, when he refused to remain in the court of Pharaoh, and preferred "the reproach of Christ to the pleasures of sin for a season."⁸ Like Paul himself, when though he had a just claim upon his converts for support, he would not be chargeable to any of them; but "wrought with his own hands night and day,"⁹ that he might not prejudice his Master's cause.

Now of this spirit we are here told, and truly told, that it *is life and peace*. It is *life*, because it has the promise of the Saviour: "He that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."¹ It is proof of that vital union with him, on which eternal life depends:

⁴ Luke xii. 19.

⁵ Acts v. 2.

⁶ John ix. 22.

⁷ 1 John ii. 16.

⁸ Heb xi. 24.

⁹ 2 Thess. iii. 8.

¹ John xi. 26.

it is the result of his grace, for he “quickeneth whom he will;” it springs from that faith in him, which whosoever hath, “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”²

Therefore it is *life*; and it is also *peace*. There is no peace to the carnal mind. It is “like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”³ The carnal mind is covetous. What more contrary to peace? The carnal mind is ambitious, jealous, envious. What more contrary to peace? But the spiritual mind is *peace*, because it is free from tumultuous passions and inordinate desires. The Lord “extends peace to it like a river;”⁴ like a full but gently flowing stream, undisturbed by tides or storms, and in its tranquil course diffusing health and fertility around.

Whereas, on the other hand, *to be carnally-minded is death*. The soul that is not raised above the world, and the things that are in the world, is still in a state of condemnation. Its “sin remaineth.”⁵ It has not undergone that change, that renewal of the spirit, which is the seal of adoption to every child of God: without which, there is no entrance into his kingdom. For as it is the character of the spiritual mind to bring every thought into conformity with the will of God: so the *carnal mind is enmity against him, and not subject to his law*. Whereas to bring our will into agreement with God’s will, is the very purpose of our redemption, and the only test of our salvation. By nature every mind is carnal; and “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” The operation of divine

² John v. 24.

³ Isa. lvii. 20.

⁴ Isa. lxvi. 12.

⁵ See John ix. 41.

grace effects a change: the carnal desires give way, and spiritual things influence the will and delight the heart. And they that are made the children of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, are thus prepared for a kingdom where that which is now earthly shall become heavenly, and that which is now corrupt shall put on incorruption. Then the flesh and the spirit shall no longer be contrary one to the other; but “God shall be all in all.”

LECTURE XXII.

THE CORRUPTION OF THE FLESH WHICH IS TO BE
OVERCOME BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

ROMANS viii. 8—15.

8. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*
9. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

The Lord Jesus had said, long before, that “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”¹ “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh;” and *they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

There must, then, be a change. That change is wrought by the Spirit of God; so that the believer in Christ is said to be “born of the Spirit;” to be no longer in *the flesh, but in the Spirit.* *And if any man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of his.* He has

¹ John iii. 3, &c.

only the nature of the first Adam, in whom “all died;” he is not partaker of the divine nature of the second Adam, in whom “all are made alive.” And this is not left a doubtful matter. It is not doubtful concerning a tree, whether on the wild stalk a better graft has been inserted. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” No less surely, if any man have the Spirit of Christ, he will show the fruits of the Spirit; “which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”² These will be the effects of the Spirit of Christ; altering the whole character of the man, and giving him a new nature.

10. *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

The carnal nature, *the body*, which is the instrument of sin, *is dead because of sin*; but *the Spirit is life, because of the righteousness* which it communicates.³ The natural body is dead to God; but the Spirit will revive this also, and make it “alive unto God through Jesus Christ.” As he had himself declared, “The time is coming, and now is, when the

² Gal. v. 22.

³ This passage has received from the beginning very different interpretations. Theodore is the authority for that which I have taken: speaking of the death of the body as a *moral* death. So Chrysostom, likewise, but with a different meaning; that of the state to which the body is brought by the Spirit, so as to be dead *in respect of sin*. The majority of modern commentators consider that the *actual*, not the *spiritual*, resurrection is intended.

dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.”⁴ The Spirit shall exercise a power over the corrupt members, like that which was displayed in raising the body of Jesus from the grave: and the members which by nature would be yielded as the instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, shall through the Spirit become the instruments of righteousness, and be active and vigorous in the service of God. The soul, indeed, is the seat of life; but the body is the instrument through which the soul operates; and by the habits of the body it is seen whether a man be living to God or to himself; and they that have the Spirit of Christ, will “glorify God in their body and in their spirit, which are God’s.”⁵

Having these promises, we have encouragement to cleanse ourselves from all corruption of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Nay, an obligation, a necessity is laid upon us.

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

13. *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: for the body is already *dead because of sin*; and unless it be quickened by the Spirit, it remains dead: and with the corrupt body the soul remains dead also; is in a state of death, from which nothing recovers it. The ori-

* John v. 25.

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

ginal character exists, that which Adam left you; and with the original character, the original sentence too: *ye shall die*: no entrance shall be allowed you into the kingdom of Christ and of God. But *if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*. The promise of Christ is fulfilled in you: ye have heard the voice, which “they that hear shall live.” For, “to as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God.”⁶ They have the privilege of children together with the character of children. Being *led by the Spirit*, they are recognized as *the sons of God*.

So important is the matter of which we must have proof. We must have proof that we do not *live after the flesh* of which we consist; we are to oppose our very nature; and on our doing so, our eternal life depends. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*.

How mistaken, then, must those be, who believe that all will be well with them, though they take no such pains: and are content to go through life as smoothly as they can, as if they had nothing to conflict with and overcome! The common language of the world is:—We have these dispositions; these “desires of the flesh and of the mind;” and He who knows they are implanted in our nature, will not expect us to resist them.

Thoughts like these will be at once rejected by the children of God. They have *received the Spirit of adoption*: and with that, a dutiful desire to know and to fulfil the will of God, and to bring their own nature into conformity with the divine.

⁶ John i. 12.

15. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

It is this feeling which ought to prevail in the Christian's mind: not a servile, but a filial spirit: which denies itself, and performs the duties to which the man is called, not only from necessity but from grateful love. Without doubt the apostle's mind here was reverting to the *bondage* from which they had been delivered: the bondage of the law, the yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. But though released from the bondage of the law, they were not without law: only the law by which they were now to be regulated was the law not of fear but of love. They were to be actuated, not by *the spirit of bondage*, which inquires, *What must I do?* But by *the spirit of adoption*, *What can I do?* The spirit which animates the child, when repaying a parent's care, and watching over the feebleness of declining years, to the exercise of watchful services which would be heavy to *the spirit of bondage*, but are light to *the spirit of adoption*. It was in that spirit that David inquired, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?” It was in that spirit that Paul declared his rule of life: “The love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.”⁷ And there is reason for this love. For it is He who has delivered us not only from the bondage of the law, but from its con-

⁷ 2 Cor. v. 14.

damnation: and has enabled us, both Jews and Gentiles, to say, each in his own language of filial tenderness, *Abba, Father.*

LECTURE XXIII.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT TO OUR ADOPTION AS CHILDREN OF GOD.

ROMANS viii. 16, 17.

16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

17. *And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

This is a most important passage, because it declares that a man's religious state may be discerned: that it ought to be discoverable by himself, and known to his own heart, whether he is one of God's children. If he is so, there are witnesses to it; there is a two-fold testimony. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.* *The Spirit of God itself,* by that power which has access to the heart, adds its testimony to *our spirit*, our own mind and understanding: that "spirit of man which is within him, which knows what is in man."

The apostle has used a term here, which suggests the idea of an examination, and a court of justice, in which out of the mouth of witnesses truth is established.

Following up this thought, we may suppose the question to be whether a person is heir to a certain title, or has a claim to a particular estate. Two things must be made clear in order to prove the right. First, of what line or family must he be, to whom by law the title or estate belongs? Next, is the claimant that person?

So, likewise, in the case of God's children. We must first inquire, what are the marks and tokens which are to be found on those whom he adopts. And then examine, whether those marks or tokens exist in ourselves.

Now the first mark of God's children is, that they have left the family to which by birth they belong, and sought for themselves admission into another. Naturally, we are not within the line to which the inheritance pertains. We are born such as we descend from Adam, and he fell from the state in which he was created. By nature, therefore, we spring from an attainted race: from a father who was disinherited. "In Adam all died." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." The history which describes Adam as driven forth from the garden of Eden, describes, still more, the lot of his posterity: driven out from the favour of God, and deprived of the heavenly inheritance. In the line to which we belong by birth, nothing awaits us but "a fearful looking for of judgment."

We must show, therefore, our title through another line, the line by which the inheritance was not forfeited, but restored. We must prove our part among the family of Christ Jesus, who took our nature upon him for the express purpose, that he

might reverse the attainer under which man was lying, and re-establish him in that place from which Adam by transgression fell. God, as it were, says to us in the Gospel, Return to the Father and the home which you have left. To recall you, and to prepare the way for your return, I send my beloved Son. Hear him. Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him: for as many as receive him, are again admitted into the family from which they have been estranged, and recover the privileges which they had lost. Partakers of this benefit by faith in him, they are once more entitled to call on God as their Father.

So that the proof, the first proof that we are within the line to which salvation comes, must be our faith: that faith of which *our spirit*, our minds, are conscious. Our spirit knows, cannot but know, what we really trust in: *witnesses* to us that we have looked round for something out of ourselves to lay hold of, something beyond ourselves to depend on in the day of judgment: *witnesses* further, that having felt our need, and sought this ground of trust, we have found a rock to stand on, and have set our feet upon it: that we have committed our souls to him, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”¹

And to this testimony of our own spirit, *the Spirit itself*, the Spirit of God, commonly *bears witness* too. Bears witness by that peace of mind which it affords, and which nothing else can give: a peace which proves its heavenly origin, because it is highest when earthly sources of peace are lowest, because it re-

¹ 1 Cor. i. 30.

mains when these are taken away. This peace “shed abroad upon the heart,” is the witness of the Spirit to that faith from which it is derived: the peace of the child, when, alarmed by danger, it takes refuge in a parent’s arms: the peace of the mariner who has moored his vessel out of the reach of storms: that peace which the apostle desires, afterwards, for these Roman Christians, as their greatest blessing, praying that “the God of hope may fill them with all joy and peace in believing.”²

This was the first thing to be witnessed, whether, as “heirs of God,” we are in the right line: whether by faith in Jesus Christ we are brought within the reach of that inheritance which by his death he purchased for them that believe in his name.

And if this were all, we might here stop. If the heavenly kingdom, like many estates on earth, descended of course to the heir in the proper line; we need look no further and inquire no more. But it is not so with God’s kingdom. The heir of eternal life must first be adopted into God’s family through the covenant that is in Christ Jesus. And then he must be a child of God in character, or the covenant is made void, and he “falls from grace.” It was here that the Jewish people were in error. They said, “We be Abraham’s children.”³ God’s favour had been given to Abraham, and promised to his descendants; so they thought themselves secure of God’s favour, as long as they belonged to the privileged line. But our Lord declared to them, “If ye were Abraham’s

² Ch. xv. 13.

³ Luke iii. 8; John viii. 33.

children, ye would do the works of Abraham.”⁴ And so it is not enough that a man profess the faith of Christ, is admitted among his people by baptism, and by virtue of such profession is styled “a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”⁵ Those must be children of God in conduct, as well as by enrolment, who are indeed *heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ*. St. Paul takes away all vain hope or groundless claim, when he adds to this glorious title: *if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

Here then, again, *the Spirit itself* must *bear witness with our spirit*: bear witness, in the language which the apostle had been before using, that we “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:” that we “mortify the deeds of the body.” Our spirit, our conscience must testify, that this is our fixed plan and purpose: that we set before ourselves a standard of living, by which the motions of sin which are in our members are restrained, and we desire to be “followers of God, as dear children.” *Our spirit* cannot deceive us in this, if faithfully examined: it must be known to our own hearts, whether we are “exercising ourselves to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards all men.”⁶

And whilst our minds give this assurance, *the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit*. The Spirit gives us power to do, what our hearts resolve to do. Of ourselves we can do nothing. However our better judgment may show us what is right, “a law in our members” opposes “the law of our mind, so that we

⁴ John viii. 39.

⁵ Church Catechism.

⁶ Acts. xxiv. 16.

cannot do the things we would." When, then, a man finds an agency within him giving him strength which of himself he has not: when he is enabled to lay aside his old nature, and to lead a new life, following the commands of God: when, in opposition to the flesh, in contradiction to his natural wishes, he is able to pursue a course which is not natural: to be moderate, when otherwise he would be intemperate: to be pure, when otherwise he would be licentious: to be meek and gentle, when otherwise he would be violent and headstrong: to be mild and forgiving, when otherwise he would be malicious and revengeful: when he finds such signs that a divine power for good is overcoming his natural propensities to evil; then he has *the Spirit itself bearing witness with his spirit* that he is one of God's children. His own spirit tells him to do what he desires and determines: the Holy Ghost enables him to do what he resolves, and to effect what he desires: and thus supplies him with that testimony which is his highest consolation. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God:" and, if sons, *then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*: those for whom, from the foundation of the world, God has prepared a kingdom, that they may be where Christ their Saviour is, and may behold his glory:⁷ nay, not behold it only, but may also *be glorified together*. This is the assurance left for our encouragement, whilst here "we walk by faith, and not by sight;" "looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God;" and "giving all diligence, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."⁸

⁷ John xvii. 24.

⁸ 2 Pet. iii. 12—14.

LECTURE XXIV.

THE RUINED STATE OF THE WORLD, AND ITS
NEED OF RESTITUTION.

ROMANS viii. 18—27.

18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

St. Paul, in the preceding sentence, had spoken of *sufferings*. “If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him.” This leads him to add here; And it is worth while. So *I reckon*: I calculate. Such is my judgment, and on this judgment I act: my life is directed by it: *that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.*

And yet if we reflect upon the apostle’s life, it was certainly a life of no light suffering. As he himself said concerning it: “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.”¹ We are little able to conceive justly of this in days like ours, when godliness has so much apparent comfort and reward with it, as to recompense, even now, the sacrifices it demands. Very different was St. Paul’s case, as he describes it, (2 Cor. xi. 24,) “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods: once was I stoned: thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 19.

been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

And yet he says, *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* It is that glory, which has long been vaguely expected, and ardently desired; which many prophets and righteous men have aspired after, but have not enjoyed: God having delayed his promises and reserved his blessings, "that they without us should not be made perfect."²

19. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

20. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,*

21. *Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

23. *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

Here the whole creation is described as restless, unsatisfied, disordered, looking for some better state of

² Heb. xi. 40.

things;³ such as was represented to Isaiah: “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”⁴ Such as St. Peter had in his thoughts, when he wrote: “ Nevertheless, brethren, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”⁵ We cannot but allow that the world, both moral and natural, is in a state of disorder, and wants a “restitution of all things:”⁶ *waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.* It was made subject to vanity, to frailty, not willingly, not of its own will or accord, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope: by permission of its Ruler, who has thus subjected it, yet not without hope of regeneration: not without hope of deliverance from a state of bondage and corruption into a purer and nobler state of freedom. Who can deny, that at present *the whole creation*, in all its parts, *groaneth and laboureth together?* Such was the effect of the original sentence: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake: thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”⁷ The Christian is, indeed, raised above the natural state; taken out of the general bondage and corruption: he has *the firstfruits of the Spirit*, which gives him a foretaste of heavenly things, and enlivens his present gloom with the prospect of “glory, and honour, and immortality.” Yet is he “not already perfect:” he still carries about him a body of death, and is anxi-

³ This is the ancient interpretation of the passage. More modern commentators prefer understanding πασα κτισις, as of the whole human race. But this would require a new translation.

⁴ Is. lxv. 17.

⁶ Acts iii. 2.

⁵ 2 Pet. iii. 13.

⁷ Gen. iii. 17.

ously waiting for his final *adoption* amongst God's children, "the saints in light :" for the complete *redemption of the body*, when there shall be no more sin, or pain, or death ; for the "former things shall have passed away."⁸

Indeed, were it not for the *bondage of corruption*, to which as long as we remain in this feeble state we must be subjected, our whole circumstances would be changed ; salvation would not be future, but present ; not something to be expected or trusted to, but now possessed and enjoyed. We know that it is not so.

24. *For we are saved by hope : but hope that is seen is not hope : for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ?*

25. *But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

We are saved *by hope*. It is not by immediate possession, but *by hope*, that we have been brought into this state of salvation.⁹ "Now abideth faith, hope, charity :"¹ these are the wings on which the Christian is borne on his way to heaven. But if he already saw his future inheritance, he would not require faith to show it him ; and if he already enjoyed his inheritance, he would not need to *wait for it in patience*. *For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ?* But we do with patience wait for it, on the assurance of hope unto the end : and sustain our present weakness with the promise of *the glory that shall be revealed*.

Nay, we have a support beyond ourselves : by

⁸ Rev. xxi. 4.

⁹ ἐσωθημεν.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

which that which is weak in us is strengthened, and that which is wanting to us is supplied.

26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

27. *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Thus the same Spirit, who, as had been before said, witnesses with our own hearts, and assures us of our relationship to God, does *also help our infirmities* : supplies the imperfection of our prayers : *makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*, but are accepted of God, that *searcheth the heart*, and sees that *the mind of the Spirit* is in unison with the desire of *the saints*, his faithful people, though they *know not what they should pray for as they ought*, and need an intercession more powerful than their own.

So vast is the interest engaged in the salvation of man, in bringing him to *the glory that shall be revealed*. We must judge of the nature of that glory, not from what man thinks in his low and grovelling nature which “cleaves unto the dust,” but from the agency which Scripture represents as being employed in raising him above it. And so we may better understand the sentiment with which Paul began, *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* “For the things which are seen, are temporal ; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.”

LECTURE XXV.

THE MERCIFUL PURPOSE OF GOD TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.

ROMANS viii. 28—30.

28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

Many things may befall the Christian, which seem very inconsistent with his welfare, very unlike what was to be expected by those who enjoy divine favour. How often, for instance, must it have been necessary for St. Paul to call in the aid of the truth here stated to his own comfort, whilst he was permitted to lie bound in prison two whole years at Jerusalem, and thus cut off from all opportunities of usefulness!¹ It required strong faith to bear up against such circumstances: strong conviction that he who orders all things, orders all things with a view to the good of his people.

Paul, therefore, meets any doubts that might occur, and prevents the despondency which trials and reverses might sometimes occasion. We have not only the comfort of knowing, what he had before affirmed, that “the Spirit helpeth our infirmities,” and “maketh intercession for us:” but we have also the encouraging assurance, that *all things work together for good to*

¹ Acts xxiv. 26, 27.

them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. According to his original purpose, he has determined that there shall be a people devoted to him; here on earth living in his faith and fear and love, and hereafter to be received to his glory. And they to whom Paul wrote, had been *called according to that purpose.* They were foreknown and predestined from the beginning:—for “known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world.” Whatever was now taking place respecting them was part of a design; their call to God’s service, their probation in his service, and their final glorification. Therefore tribulations, or persecutions, instead of injuring them, should serve as means towards their final salvation. God had a *purpose*, a design respecting them which should not be frustrated. All the difficulties and trials which they may be appointed to undergo, shall contribute to accomplish that design.

29. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.*

It was no chance, no contingency, which had brought them to their present state. All its steps were ordained. They who were now *the called*, were those whom God had from the first *foreknown*. As he *foreknew* those, who became the disciples of Paul at Corinth, and formed the Christian church in that city. God had detained Paul there, when otherwise he might have removed to a place which seemed more promising: the Lord spake to Paul by a vision, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I have much people in this city.”² As he

* Acts xviii. 10.

“knows them that are his,” when their hearts are turned towards him: so he foreknows them that will be his, when their hearts yet appear to be far from him. He foreknew the ready faith of Lydia and the rest of the Philippian church, when he directed Paul’s course from Bithynia to Macedonia.³ The end, and the means to accomplish that end, were alike providentially designed.

And a part of these means, are the circumstances, of whatever kind, which the people of God pass through. They must be endued with a certain character; the character of Christ. They must be *conformed to his image*. And therefore they must be placed in the circumstances by which that character is produced and exercised. He had been “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” As the prophet said, “We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”⁴ It might be that such should be the appointed lot of some of those whom he was bringing to glory: that in this sense as well as in others, he *might be the first born among many brethren*, who should, like him, be “made perfect through sufferings.”⁵ These, therefore, must be prepared, if need be, “to suffer with him, that they might be also glorified together.” God’s purpose might be thus, and only thus, fulfilled. The same foreknowledge and wisdom would order and direct the whole.

But perhaps the afflicted Christian may want a proof of this. Like Hezekiah of old, he may doubt of God’s merciful intentions towards him; and as

³ Acts xvi. 7—12.

⁴ Isa. liii. 3, 4.

⁵ Heb. ii. 10.

that king said, “What shall be the sign that the Lord shall heal me?”⁶ the sufferer may be disposed to ask, How shall I know that the Lord has a favour unto me, and out of very faithfulness causes me to linger in affliction? This proof is given, in his present state and condition: in what God has already done.⁷

30. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

God has already made him to differ from others, in “calling him to repentance and the knowledge of the truth.” He has not been left in darkness, but the light of the Gospel has been manifested to him. Neither has he been permitted to close his eyes against the light, and choose to abide in darkness. The Lord has opened his heart, to attend unto the things spoken by his messengers. He has been called, and he has obeyed the calling: and therefore has this proof that “God has predestinated him unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.⁸ Why should he not trust that the mercy which has brought him thus far, will accompany him unto the end?

For all things are in due order. The ultimate glory which God designs for his people, is already theirs in his will and purpose: but it can only be granted them in his appointed way. It can only

⁶ 2 Kings xx. 8.

⁷ Εἰδες ποσα ἡμιν ἔχαρισεν: μη τοινυν ἀμφιβαλλε περι των μελλοντων.—Chrysos.

⁸ Eph. i. 5.

come to them through the Son ; and that the Son may bestow it, he must be believed in : and that he may be believed in, he must be made known ; set forth as “the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.”

This due order had been observed, and all these things had met together in the case of those to whom Paul was writing, and whom he encourages under trials, and the prospect of trials, by assurance of future glory. The favour of God had taken its regular course. *For whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* These had been already *called*, and having embraced the truth, were also *justified*. And they who have been thus called by the Spirit of God working in due season to “redemption through Christ Jesus,” are those whom he has predestinated to everlasting salvation :⁹ those who in his purpose and design are already *glorified*. Just as Joseph when carried down to Egypt as a slave, or when lying for years in the prison to which he had been condemned, was in the purpose and foreknowledge of God “governor over all the land of Egypt.”

It is a natural question arising from these words, Are we among that blessed company here spoken of, whom God has predestinated to everlasting glory ? No special revelation is given to tell us this. The first token of divine favour belongs to us. God has already granted us an “advantage great every way :” we have been planted in a christian land, and by baptism enrolled amongst his family. This indeed is

⁹ Art. xvii.

not alone sufficient. We know that “many are called” to outward privileges, who are not finally “chosen” to inherit the heavenly kingdom. But though nothing can prove that we are predestinated to glory, except a faith and practice conformable to the gospel;—still our outward calling is an earnest of the goodwill of God towards us, which nothing but our own unbelief and hardness of heart can render vain. As the wife of Manoah argued, (Judges xiii. 23,) “If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have showed us all these things.” We cannot expect that “the book of life” should be opened before our eyes. But if my heavenly Father has sent down a message to me, and the messenger his beloved Son, inviting me to his service here, and his inheritance hereafter, what more can I ask, what further assurance of his favour can I desire?

LECTURE XXVI.

THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S LOVE TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE A MOTIVE FOR ENDURANCE UNTO THE END.

ROMANS viii. 13—39.

31. *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

33. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

34. *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

These are the considerations by which the Christian might be encouraged, under all the trials to which he is exposed. And many have been the seasons in the general history of the church, as well as in the history of the apostles, when assurances like these would be not only as a cheering cordial, but as necessary food. When assaults were made upon the people of Christ which threatened to leave none remaining who bore the christian name, it was needful they should feel that he who was with them was greater than those that were against them: that *the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, purchased by his blood, and secured by his intercession, could never forsake those whom he had called and justified. The world might be against them; all manner of evil might be said against them falsely for Christ's sake: they might be brought before kings and rulers on account of their religion. *But if God be for us, who can be against us?* “The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me.” And that the Lord is on our side, we have the surest proofs. *He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Can we doubt his favour, which he has proved so signally? All that is needful, all that is expedient, he surely will provide, who has provided so much already. “All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.”¹

Men, indeed, condemn us, might the apostles say. They accuse us, that we turn the world upside down: that we teach customs which ought not to be received: that we are movers of sedition, among all the

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 23.

Jews throughout the world.² But it is little for us to be opposed or to be condemned of man, or of man's judgment: he that judgeth us is the Lord: and *if God justifieth, who is he that condemneth?*³ They need not heed the condemnation of man, who are “at peace with God through Jesus Christ.” Their God has chosen them for his own; and *who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* They “have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:⁴ *he that died, yea rather that is risen again, also maketh intercession for them.* For as he “died for our sins, he rose again for our justification:” and they who are his “shall never perish,”⁵ either through the malice of man, or by the power of Satan.

As then, on the one side, nothing could separate God from his people, so, on the other side, let nothing separate them from God. Let them “hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering,” in nothing terrified by their adversaries.⁶

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

36. *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

37. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

38. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

² Acts xvii. 6; xvi. 21; xxv. 5.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 3.

⁴ 1 John ii. 1.

⁵ John x. 28.

⁶ Heb. x. 23. Phil. i. 28.

39. *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

“I am now ready to be offered,”—so writes Paul to Timothy,⁷—“and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.”

With this confidence he may justly ask, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* What enemy of the truth shall be so powerful, as to make us unfaithful to him, who “has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers?” *Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness,* are certainly for the present “not joyous, but grievous;” and it may be conceded, that if “in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable.”⁸ But it is no new thing for the people of God to be in circumstances of affliction. Long ago it was written,⁹ *For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* So far, then, from being overcome, and forced to yield up that which we have chosen as most precious, in all these things we are rather conquerors than vanquished; nay, *more than conquerors through him that loved us,* and stands by us, and strengthens us.¹

We straitly threaten you, said the chief priests and rulers to Peter and John, that ye “speak not at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.”² To whom they replied, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. ⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 19. ⁹ Ps. xliv. 22.

¹ See 2 Tim. iv. 17. ² Acts iv. 18—20.

hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Surely here they were *more than conquerors through him who loved them.* That which has most power over a man, in his natural state, is death. When he loses life, he loses everything. But Christ has overcome death. And therefore the Christian overcomes it. Because he liveth *who loved him*, the Christian shall live also.³ He then may defy what otherwise would be irresistible—Death. *Death* might threaten, *life* might allure; evil *angels* might attempt to deceive, *principalities* and *powers* might contend against them: *things present* might be adverse, and *things to come* might terrify: all creation, from its loftiest *heights* to its lowest *depths*, might unite to shake and overthrow them: but in vain. Paul spoke with the confidence of experience when he said: *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Therefore, let them "comfort one another with these words:" and "be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."⁴ "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well doing to him, as to a faithful Creator,"⁵ to whom they are more closely bound by the violence of the storm which vainly threatens to estrange Him from them, or them from Him.

³ John xiv. 19. ⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

⁵ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

LECTURE XXVII.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN REJECTING THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

ROMANS ix. 1—18.

1. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,*
2. *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*
3. *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*
4. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;*
5. *Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

Paul turns now from the Christians whom he had been addressing in the last four chapters, to those of his *brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh*, who still persisted in that unbelief and hardness of heart from which he himself had been mercifully delivered. The message had come to them attested by prophecy and miracle, inviting them, “Be ye reconciled to God.” They had refused to hear the voice which called them: and therefore “their sin remained.” And this he was forced to declare. It was his office to proclaim, that “there was no difference:”¹ the

¹ See ch. iii. 22.

Jew as well as the Gentile was “concluded under sin,” and there was only one name under heaven whereby they might be saved. But to declare it, was pain and grief to him. He had *great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart*: so deeply affecting him, that he could *wish himself to be accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake*,² if by any means he might save them.

This is one of the strong expressions by which St. Paul shows his earnestness and sincerity. He could not really desire to bring himself under the curse, that others might be relieved from it, even though they were his brethren. But having feelings like those of David, when Absalom had fallen in battle, he breaks out with similar vehemence; “Would God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”³

Can, then, the Israelites be cast off, the chosen nation, the peculiar people: *adopted* by God as his own: favoured by the presence of his *glory*: united to him by *covenant*: governed by *the law* which he had given: possessed of *the promises*, and *the services* of his temple: the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: nay, from whom Christ took his human nature, *who is over all, God blessed for ever?* Can such a nation as this be alienated from the love of God?

And yet, if we consider, there is nothing in this contradictory to his word or counsels.

6. *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:*

² *ἀνθεμα*, excommunicated, or made an outcast from Christ. The ancients all agree in this interpretation.

³ 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

7. *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

8. *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

9. *For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.*

There is no failure of God's promises, if he has rejected some and accepted others. It was so from the beginning. All the children of Israel were not his people Israel. He has always exercised his sovereignty in this respect. He made an election between the sons of Abraham. Abraham had prayed for his son Ishmael; "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"⁴ But God had said, "My covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee." *In Isaac shall thy seed be called.* My covenant shall not be according to "the will of the flesh, or the will of man," but according to *the word of promise*: the promise based upon determinate counsel and foreknowledge.

God, therefore, from the origin of our nation, reserved to himself a right of choosing or rejecting whom he will.

And not only this: but our history gives another instance.

10. *And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;*

11. *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)*

⁴ Gen. xvii. 18, 19.

12. *It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.*⁵

13. *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*⁶

Thus Esau, the eldest, was rejected; Jacob, the youngest, chosen. For no other reason, that we can see, than because such was God's will: *that the purpose of God according to election might stand*: that he might show his sovereign power. For there had been no desert on the part of either: it could not be said to *be of works*, as a due, and therefore what might be claimed on the part of Jacob or his descendants. Both the sons could not enjoy the privilege: and God determined by which it should be enjoyed, and who should become the father of his adopted people.

14. *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*

15. *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*⁷

16. *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

17. *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*⁸

18. *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

“The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is: the compass of the world, and they that dwell

⁵ Gen. xxv. 22.

⁶ Mal. i. 2, 3.

⁷ Ex. xxxiii. 19.

⁸ Ex. ix. 16.

therein." Who shall deny to him the power of choosing, as he will, the objects of his especial privileges? He has always claimed to himself this liberty. At the very moment when he was conducting his people to the promised land, he laid down this as the rule of his government. *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.* So that it was not of man's desire, or man's exertion, that Isaac or Jacob were the fathers of the chosen people, or that their descendants became the chosen people, or Moses their chosen leader. *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

And as it was with Israel, who was chosen, so was it also with Pharaoh, who was rejected. He was raised up to greatness, that his fall might be more signal: and that an example might be given to all the earth, "Woe unto the man that striveth with his Maker."⁹ God might, if he had seen fit, have softened Pharaoh's heart. The repentance which he often professed, might have been turned to a real and enduring repentance. God did soften Paul's heart, who had been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" to the cause of Christ. He left Pharaoh's heart in a state of hardness, so that he would "not obey his voice to let Israel go."¹ *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.*

These examples prove that the Israelites could not complain, or say that *there is unrighteousness with God.* The principle of his government was the same now, when he dealt with them in anger, as it had

⁹ Isa. xiv. 9.

¹ Ex. v. 2, &c.

before been when he dealt with them in mercy. He had once seen fit to choose them, “ above all the nations of the earth,” that *the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the law*, might be theirs. This privilege would be no longer continued. The same counsel which had chosen them, had now rejected them. They were cast off.

In one thing only was there difference. We are not told, why God preferred Isaac to Ishmael, or Jacob to Esau. It was of his own purpose, *the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil.* These are among “ the secret things which belong to the Lord our God.”² Neither does it concern us. But it does concern us, and because it concerns us, it has been clearly revealed, why the Israelites were no longer to enjoy his favour. As he said to Saul, (1 Sam. xv. 26,) “ Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel;” so he now declares to the Israelites, Because “ your heart is waxed gross, and your ears are dull of hearing, and your eyes ye have closed,” and ye have put my word of mercy from you, and “ judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life:” my Gospel shall be offered to the Gentiles, “ for they will hear it.”³ A new fold shall be opened, and many shall enter into it. They shall come from the north and from the south, and from the east and from the west: and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God.⁴ For many that are first, shall be last; and the last first. For many are called, but few chosen.⁵

² Deut. xxix. 29.

³ Acts xxviii. 27; xiii. 46.

⁴ Luke xiii. 29.

⁵ Matt. xix. 30.

LECTURE XXVIII.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN CASTING OFF THE DISOBEDIENT JEWS, AND RECEIVING THE REPENTANT GENTILES.

ROMANS ix. 19—33.

19. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?*

So the Jew might argue from what Paul had written, and dispute the goodness of God. You say, that *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*. *Why doth he yet find fault?* We are but doing what “his determinate counsel and foreknowledge”¹ intended should be done. We are not *resisting his will*, but fulfilling it. Why should we suffer his displeasure?

Here again St. Paul replies by asserting the sovereignty of God. He had followed his own supreme will, in choosing the Jewish nation; he might also follow it in rejecting them.

20. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

21. *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

As the potter, from the same clay, makes some vessels to noble and sumptuous purposes, and others

¹ Acts ii. 23.

for meaner use: and as the vessel which he designed for a noble use is sometimes marred, and he turns to a different purpose the same material in his hand: so it has been with us, the Jewish people. God called our nation to honour, and we have been honourable: we have had “advantages great every way:” unto us “were committed the oracles of God.” And now he takes other nations to honour, and reduces us to dishonour. What have we to reply against God? That has come to pass which is written in the prophet Jeremiah; who has said, (xviii. 3—6,) “I went down to the potter’s house, and behold, he wrought a work upon the wheels. And the vessel which he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord? Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel.” And *who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?*

More especially, when in the exercise of his power he has remembered mercy, and has shown forth much long suffering. The vessels which were made unto honour, have long ceased to answer their high purposes, and have been ready to be “marred in the hands of the potter:” fitted to be destroyed. God has endured them long, till the fulness of time is come when mercy might be made known to others: that when *the vessels of wrath* were cast away, *the vessels of mercy* might be *prepared for glory*; ready to receive it: even those *whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.*

22. *What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction :²*

23. *And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,*

24. *Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ?*

25. *As he saith also in Osee,³ (Hosea,) I will call them my people, which were not my people ; and her beloved, which was not beloved.*

26. *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people ; there shall they be called the children of the living God.*

27. *Esaias also crieth concerning Israel,⁴ Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved :*

28. *For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness : because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.*

29. *And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.⁵*

It is, therefore, no new thing on the part of God, that he takes a people to himself who were not his people. The prophets had plainly foretold it. Hosea had shown how the Gentiles should be brought to honour, and they who had never known God, should come to be *called his children*. Isaiah, too, had spoken of a time when the Israelites, once numerous as *the sand of the sea*, should become a mere

² Long bearing with the gainsaying and disobedient people. So the ancient commentators.

³ Hos. i. 10, 11, 23.

⁴ Is. x. 21—23. The sense is given, not the exact words.

⁵ Ib. i. 9.

remnant: when only a *seed* should remain of that once flourishing plant which had filled the land of Canaan, and spread its branches into distant nations. If only a *remnant* should be saved, the larger part must be intended for destruction: if only a *seed* should be left, the tree must be cut down. One thing, and one only, could have averted this. For Jeremiah had said, when he showed the Israelites that they were as clay in the potter's hand: (xviii. 7, 8:) “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.”

Here, therefore, is a difference between the clay in the potter's hand, and the Jewish nation in the hand of God. When the potter, out of *the same lump*, makes one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour, there is nothing which we can perceive in the clay to determine him. It is not so, when the vessels which were made to honour, have been cast off, and their place is filled by others. We are distinctly told, why some have become *vessels of wrath*, and others *of mercy*. The one party rejected, the other received, the word of God. One obtained by faith, what the others lost through unbelief.

30. *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.*

31. *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*

32. *Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but*

as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

33. *As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.⁶*

The Gospel was a stumblingblock to the Jews, who believed themselves righteous, and despised others. To attach themselves to Christ, implied self-condemnation. But they were self-satisfied. To attach themselves to Christ, implied that they were lost without him. But they thought themselves secure. To attach themselves to Christ, was to forfeit the homage of the multitude. But they sought “honour one of another.”⁷ So *they stumbled at that stumblingstone*, which was “set for the fall of many in Israel.”⁸ They *sought not righteousness by faith*, which would have been a sign of humility: *but as it were by the works of the law*, which very law condemned them. For the law was spiritual: but they were carnal.

Meanwhile *the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness*, depended not on righteousness of their own, *attained the righteousness which is by faith*. They applied themselves to Christ as sinners, and as believers in him were pardoned. They did not “resist the Holy Ghost,”⁹ when it “reproved them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” Therefore many of them believed, and *attained to righteousness*. They became *vessels of mercy*, whilst the Jews brought upon themselves swift destruction. As was seen at Antioch, where the *vessels of wrath* and the *vessels of mercy* appear before us in awful and instructive contrast.

⁶ Is. viii. 14, 15; xxviii. 16.

⁸ Luke ii. 34.

⁷ John v. 44.

⁹ Acts vii. 51.

(Acts xiii. 44.) “On the sabbath day, came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.” He that was *a rock of offence* to the self-righteous Jews, became a pillar of salvation to the humble Gentiles: who obtained to themselves the promise, *Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

LECTURE XXIX.

THE WAY OF SALVATION REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS x. 1—11.

1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*
2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*
3. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

Paul was accused of treachery towards his own countrymen, because he preached the Gospel to those

who were not his countrymen. He again declares, that no object was so dear to his heart, as the salvation of Israel. But they could only be saved in the way which God had appointed. *They had a zeal of God.* They were proud of their privilege, as possessing his word: as being worshippers of the true and living God, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. They abhorred idols: they observed the rites and ceremonies of the law. But this their *zeal of God* was not according to knowledge of his real will. They thought that they were doing him service when they were persecuting his own peculiar people.¹ Paul well understood this; remembering his own state of mind, when he “verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”² They *went about to establish their own righteousness*: like him who boasted, “I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.”³ But they would not *submit themselves to the righteousness of God.* They had no such sense of unworthiness, as to value eternal life as “the gift of God through Jesus Christ.” They “were Jews by nature, not sinners of the Gentiles:” Must they also be condemned? Were they “blind also?”⁴

Thus they understood not how the design or object of *the law*, man’s justification, was accomplished in the Gospel: and how “they that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

¹ John xvi. 2.

² Acts xxvi. 9.

³ Luke xviii. 12.

⁴ John ix. 40.

⁵ Acts xiii. 39.

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

5. *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

6. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,⁶ Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :)*

7. *Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*

8. *But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach:*

9. *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

11. *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.⁷*

Thus there are two ways in which man might attain unto righteousness:—be justified before God.

⁶ This passage is an application of the words in Deut. xxx. 11—14. “This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” St. Paul turns this to his own purpose; *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?* That impossibility has been achieved: Christ *has descended from above.* *Say not in thine heart, Who shall descend into the deep,* and show us the things of the grave? That too has been done. Christ is risen again from the dead. So that the *word which we preach is nigh thee*, and there is no place for doubting.

⁷ Isa. xxviii. 16.

He might be justified as being in all the requirements of the law, both moral and ceremonial, blameless. *Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.* Or he might be justified, as being freely received of God for the sake of Jesus Christ:—"accepted in the Beloved."⁸ In that case, Christ would become *the end of the law for righteousness*: would fulfil the design of the law, and procure man's acceptance with God.

In the first way, no man living can be justified. For who is he that liveth, and sinneth not? "In many things we offend all." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But *the word of faith* offers deliverance from this state of condemnation. *The Lord Jesus*, "to as many as receive him, gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." "Whosoever believeth in him shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."⁹ *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

No passage in Scripture declares more plainly the way of salvation. It shows what is to be felt; and it shows what is to be done. There must be such a feeling of need in ourselves, as leads us to seek deliverance: such a conviction of sufficiency in Christ as leads us to seek deliverance from Him. For to *believe in the heart that God hath raised up Jesus from the dead*, is to believe that he "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." And

⁸ Eph. i. 6.

⁹ John i. 12; v. 24.

the heart which feels this, is in the right frame to receive mercy. It acknowledges its own demerit, whilst it lays hold on the merits of Christ's death. It feels as the apostles felt, when the sea was raging around them: "Save, Lord, or we perish."¹ Like the nobleman of Capernaum, who pressed with such earnestness his entreaty: "Sir, come down ere my child die."² Like the woman of Canaan: "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be healed."³ No one can doubt that the heart was engaged here. And *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*. He is "counted righteous" for Christ's sake, having *submitted himself to the righteousness of God*.

But though this faith has its seat in the heart, it must not lie hidden there. It must be acknowledged and exhibited in the life. The apostle says here, *If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus*. He alludes to the chief trial of that age. The believer was asked whether he was a Christian. If he confessed it, he must be prepared for "the spoiling of his goods:" or for "cruel mockings and scourgings:" or for "imprisonment:" or for "sundry kinds of death." Therefore to *confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus*, was a proof of sincere devotedness. Such a proof as Simon promised, when he said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Yet such as he could not actually exhibit, till he was strengthened from above. Such proofs the history of the early church is full of: when multitudes, being compelled to swear by the heathen deities, on pain

¹ John iv. 46—49.

² John iv. 40.

³ Matt. ix. 21.

of immediate death, replied in the spirit of the martyr Polycarp: “ Reproach Christ !” (this was demanded of him :) “ Lo, these eighty and six years do I serve him, and never hath he injured me; and how can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour ?”

What was in those times the confession of the mouth, must be, now, the confession of the life. They who act upon the principles of the Gospel, must act in a different way from many by whom they are surrounded ; just as those who then confessed that they worshipped Christ, were opposed to the unbelieving Jews, and to their heathen neighbours who adhered to their idols. And by so living, *confession is made unto salvation.* “ Faith is perfected :”⁴ and the purpose is accomplished for which “ the grace of God appeared unto all men ;” namely, that he might “ purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and redeemed from all iniquity.”⁵

LECTURE XXX.

THE DUTY OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES.

ROMANS X. 12—21.

12. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

⁴ James ii. 22.

⁵ Tit. ii. 14.

13. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*¹

So said the prophets of old. Many such sentences appear in their writings; like streaks of light in the horizon, which intimate the dawn of a bright day to come, when the favour of God should be openly manifested to all, which had hitherto been extended to the Jew alone.” Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.”² *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Does not this show that a time was approaching, when there should be *no difference between the Jew and the Greek*: for that God is no respecter of persons, but *rich unto all that call upon him?*

Why, then, should the Jews be jealous, and “ forbid us to speak unto the Gentiles that they may be saved?” If God at the sixth or ninth hour chooses to hire fresh labourers into his vineyard,³ and to give them a share in the heavenly recompense, why should the older labourers grudge or murmur? Why be envious because God is merciful? We have the prophetic assurance, that *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* But they must first learn on whom to call.

14. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

15. *And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*⁴

¹ Joel ii. 32.

² Isa. lv. 1.

³ Matt. xx. 1, &c.

⁴ Isa. lii. 7; Nahum i. 15.

If God intends the salvation of a people, he provides the means of their salvation. When the leper called upon the Lord Jesus for a cure, saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;”⁵ he believed in his divine power. But he could not have believed, unless he had first heard of his fame; and he could not have heard of his fame, if no one had proclaimed it. How then shall the Gentiles *call upon the name of the Lord*, unless his apostles *are sent* to preach the Gospel to them? And *it is written*, that they should be sent. Isaiah foresaw in his prophetic vision, how the Lord should give the word, and a great company should go forth to *preach the Gospel* of peace. He pictured them to himself like a party advancing to relieve some besieged camp, or furnish supplies to some country wasted by famine; when he exclaimed, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation!”

16. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

17. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

It is true, as some might object, that *all have not obeyed the Gospel*. Some of the heathen, like the Jews themselves, have “put it from them, and counted themselves unworthy of eternal life.” But this too was foreseen: for *Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*⁶ The grace of God has been too often frustrated by the unbelief of man. Still this should not prevent our proclaiming the

⁵ Matt. viii. 2.

⁶ Is. liii. 1.

glad tidings; for without hearing, none could believe: *faith cometh by hearing*; and without preaching none could believe; for the word believed, is the word preached, *the word of God*.

18. *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.*⁷

We read this in the nineteenth Psalm. So that even David foretold the time when the ways of God should be known on earth, his “saving health unto all nations.” And though many may have heard in vain, and *not believed our report*, many have both heard and hearkened, and have come from *the end of the world*, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and have entered into the kingdom of God.

Notice, moreover, timely notice had been given to the Israelites themselves. Moses foretold God’s purposes regarding them; Isaiah confirmed the same; and together with the prophecy declared the reasons of his counsels.

19. *But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*⁸

20. *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*⁹

21. *But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*¹

Thus the way of God’s dealings is disclosed and justified. What Moses, what Isaiah predicted, had

⁷ Ps. xix. 4.

⁸ Deut xxxii. 21.

⁹ Isa. lxv. 1, 2.

¹ Isa. lxv. 2.

come to pass. The jealousy of the Jewish nation was provoked, nay, their anger and malice excited, because a people whom they had considered as no people had been turned from their vanities to serve the living and true God. “God had granted unto the Gentiles also repentance unto life.” And was there unrighteousness with God, who had shown compassion to the ignorant, and removed the light from those who wilfully closed their eyes against it? The chief priests and elders could not resist the force of conviction, when the conduct of their nation was set before them in a parable.² Jesus asked, “When the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruit in their seasons.” Thus they acknowledged the justice of God, who would be *found of them that sought him not, and made manifest unto them that asked not after him*, having compassion upon their ignorance; whilst he withdrew the blessing from *a disobedient and gainsaying people*, who “would not that he should reign over them;” who “set at nought his counsel,” and when they were called, refused. “From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.”³

To individuals as well as nations, a solemn warning is here given. “Seek ye the Lord whilst he may be found, call upon him whilst he is near.”⁴ “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto

² Matt. xxi. 40.

³ Luke viii. 18.

⁴ Isa. lv. 6.

you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”⁵ Many shall seek too late for the mercy, which “in the acceptable time, the day of salvation,” they refused. Like the foolish virgins, they shall say, “Lord, open to us!” and the answer shall be, “I know you not.”⁶ Then they shall appeal to the Saviour, but in vain. Now he appeals to them: (and now let the appeal be heard!) “Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me.”⁷

LECTURE XXXI.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BELIEVING AND THE UNBELIEVING ISRAELITES.

ROMANS xi. 1—10.

1. I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

The Jews were no longer the favoured people of God. He would take away from them the inheritance and give it to others, who should succeed to the place which they had forfeited. This has been already declared, and shown to be most just. They had not received Him whom God sent to be “a Prince and a Saviour;” and they must be content to

⁵ Luke xiii. 24.

⁶ Matt. xxv. 11, 12.

⁷ Revel. iii. 20.

see those who did receive him sit down in the kingdom of God, whilst they themselves were thrust out.

But was there no exception? *God forbid* that there should be no exception. Paul was himself *an Israelite*; and had the feelings of an Israelite; and he rejoices that God had still reserved a portion of “the holy seed;”¹ those whom he had foreknown from the beginning, who had “not consented to the counsel and deed” of their countrymen,² but believed in Him whom they rejected. It was in this, as it had been seven hundred years before.

2. *God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias?*³ how he maketh intercession⁴ with God against Israel, saying,

3. *Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.*

4. *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*

5. *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*⁵

6. *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

Paul was an Israelite. Yet he was not *cast away*. He was a chosen vessel unto God. The other apostles were Israelites; and the five hundred brethren, by whom the Lord was seen before his ascension; and the “thousands of Jews which believed,” whom Paul found at Jerusalem:⁶ these are they whom the

¹ Isa. vi. 13.

² Luke xxiii. 15.

³ 1 Kings xix. 8.

⁴ ἐντυγχανει, pleads.

⁵ Ch. ix. 27.

⁶ Acts xxi. 20.

mercy of God had made to differ from others; they whose eyes he had seen fit to open, that they might see what others would not see, and receive what their countrymen refused. When Paul preached at Iconium, (Acts xiv. 1—3,) “the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.” Yet “a great multitude, both of the Greeks and also of the Jews, believed.” Here then was *a remnant*, as in Elijah’s time, *according to the election of grace*; chosen by God’s mercy, in agreement with the original mercy which selected Israel from among all the nations of the earth: a company now united to God in the covenant of the Gospel, instead of “putting it from them, and counting themselves unworthy of eternal life.”⁷

And the mention of *grace*, reminds the apostle of what he had been before so earnestly arguing: that salvation, to whomsoever it comes, comes of free mercy; “not of works, that any man should boast.” Though these are not, like the unbelieving part of the nation, “appointed unto wrath,” still their salvation is of grace. There is no other salvation than of grace: no other acceptance of eternal life, except as “the gift of God through Jesus Christ.” This must be ever borne in mind. If we say that these are saved by their works, by their righteousness and holiness; if we even make their faith a work, and assign a merit to it:—then *grace is no more grace*; and the difference is no longer maintained between the works of man which earn reward, and the mercy of God which is freely bestowed. As Paul had

⁷ Τω είπειν ἐκλογην, ἐδειξεν ἐκεινων την δοκιμην. τω δε είπειν χαριτος, ἐδειξε του Θεου την δωρεαν. Chrys.

shown before, “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly; his faith is counted for righteousness.”⁸ It is, therefore, of God’s mere goodness, that as there was a remnant of old, who *did not bow the knee to Baal*; so there is *at this present time a remnant*, whom he has not cast away, because they have believed in him to whom “every knee shall bow;” have “confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”⁹

7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded

8. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;)¹ unto this day.

9. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

*10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.*²

The fact is clear, and cannot be denied. *Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for.* “Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”³ A portion has received God’s favour. To that remnant which he has chosen to himself, Christ has been “made wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” *The rest are blinded.* The prophecy has become true, which pronounced

⁸ Ch. iv. 4; Deut. ix. 4.

⁹ Phil. ii. 10.

¹ Deut. xxix. 4; Isa. vi. 10.

² Ps. Ixix. 22.

³ Rom. x. 3.

this doom: foretold that *a spirit of slumber should be given them, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.*

How, then, did they act, to deserve this awful sentence?

They read the Scriptures partially. They took the passages which favoured their nation, and overlooked the many passages which denounce woe against those who, professing to know God, yet in works deny him. They said, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we:”⁴ but they did not perceive that “the temple of the Lord is holy:” and when it ceases to be holy, can be his no longer. Thus, in the words of David, *their table became a snare to them.* The Scriptures which were intended for their nourishment, became as it were their poison. They extracted the promises, and omitted the commands.

Further, they desired their own glory, not the glory of God. Instead of praying that all nations should come and worship him, they were moved with envy when they saw the multitudes come together to hear the word of God.⁵ They said to the Gentile, “Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.”⁶ And, worse still, they would forbid the means by which the Gentiles might be brought to holiness.⁷ This was a state of treason against God and their fellow-creatures. It justly deserved that they should be humbled and *bowed down*, who had hitherto been bowing down the backs of others.

Therefore Isaiah’s prophecy is accomplished. “The

⁴ See Jerem. vii. 4.

⁵ See Acts xiii. 44, 45.

⁶ Isa. lxv. 5.

⁷ 1 Thess. ii. 16.

Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.”⁸ He has closed the eyes which would not see: has allowed the hearts which would not be roused to remain in slumber, till “ sudden destruction come upon them unawares.” For “the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me;—therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”⁹

The doom of Jerusalem is the doom of all who act after the manner of the inhabitants of Jerusalem: who by vain excuses, or unfounded hopes, or bigoted prejudices, blind their minds against the light of the Gospel. The Lord Jesus, when he beheld the fated city, wept over it. And we may well weep over those who follow their example of unbelief, and say “ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! But now they are hid from thine eyes.”¹

⁸ Isa. xxix. 10.

⁹ Ib. 13.

¹ Luke xix. 42.

LECTURE XXXII.

THE GENTILES AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH TO THE JEWS: AND THE JEWS TO THE GENTILES AN EXAMPLE OF UNBELIEF.

ROMANS xi. 11—24.

11. *I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.*

It was acknowledged, and could not be denied, that the Jewish nation had forfeited the divine favour. They “stumbled at that stumbling stone,” which, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, had been “set in Sion.”¹ Instead of a rock of safety, it had proved a “rock of offence” to them. But one may stumble, and not fall utterly or finally. Paul hopes this of his countrymen. *Have they stumbled that they should fall, so fall as to rise no more? God forbid.* Let us rather say that *salvation is come to the Gentiles*, than that the Jews have lost salvation: let us rather hope, that seeing the humble obedience of the Gentiles, who receive the word, the Jews *may be provoked to jealousy*: animated by their example, to follow their steps.

This would have been the effect, if they had been rightly disposed, and filled with love of God or man. It was thus with Peter and his companions in the house of Cornelius at Cæsarea. (Acts x. 44.) Whilst

¹ Ch. ix. 33; see Is. viii. 14, 15.

Peter was expounding to the company assembled there the truths of the Gospel, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word.” The Jewish disciples who were with Peter were astonished: it had never entered into the minds of these good men that a spiritual gift could be bestowed on an uncircumcised heathen. But they did not “withstand God,” when such plain evidence made his purpose manifest.² “Then answered Peter and said, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”³ So likewise when certain of the early converts were led by a laudable zeal to “speak unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and a great number of them believed and turned unto the Lord;” the church at Jerusalem was surprised, but not angered, at the tidings. (Acts xi. 20—23.) They did not murmur, and complain that Greeks had been brought into the temple, and “the holy place polluted:”⁴ but they inquired, Is it the Lord’s doing? They sent down Barnabas to examine this new thing, that God had granted unto the Gentiles also repentance unto life. And he, when he came to Antioch, and “had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”

Very different was the scene in Pisidia, when there was a like stir, and “almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.” (Acts xiii. 43—50.) A pious mind would have rejoiced, would have acknowledged in this movement the fulfilling of the pro-

² Acts xi. 17.

³ Ib. x. 47.

⁴ See Acts xxi. 28.

phecies, which had promised light to the Gentiles, and salvation to the ends of the earth. “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.” The feeling which arose in their minds ought properly to have been a holy *jealousy*. Since God has made no difference between us and them, and they like ourselves are become partakers of his grace, let us “provoke one another to love and good works,” and strive together, which party may prove the most faithful “stewards of his gifts.” And this Paul still prayed might ensue: and that his Jewish countrymen, when they saw their Gentile neighbours “walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost,” might be *provoked to emulation, and he might save some of them*. This, he says, would be a blessed consummation. He kindles at the thought, and rejoices in such a prospect, with its glorious consequences. If the Gospel, rejected by the Jews, enriches the Gentiles with the possession of an unlooked-for treasure; how much more would they be enriched if the Jews were to be restored to God’s favour, and “filled with all the fulness” of Christ? Such an accomplishment of prophecy, such a manifestation of God’s goodness, what would it not effect?

12. *Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?*

13. *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:*

14. *If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*

15. *For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

To effect reconciliation, is great and glorious: to restore life, is greater and more glorious still. When the apostles gave up the unbelieving Jews, and turned to the Gentiles, there was *reconciling of the world*: nations that had been alienated from God were brought to love and serve him. But when the Jew ceases to be unbelieving, and receives the Gospel, such an event will cause an awakening which can only be compared to the resurrection of the dead to new life and being.

Neither will there be refusal on the part of God. He has received the *first fruits*, as dedicated to himself and made holy: he will not refuse the whole mass: the harvest of the nation. So likewise the root of the nation was holy in his sight: and so shall the branches be.

16. *For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.⁵*

This casual mention of *the branches* springing from the *root* or stock of the Jewish nation, reminds Paul of another example. He compares the Gentile churches, now admitted to the privileges of the one

⁵ By the law of Moses, (see Levit. x. 10—17,) two cakes made of the flour of the year, were offered as firstfruits unto the Lord. This sanctified the whole lump: the whole produce of the harvest. To these firstfruits Paul compares the Jewish converts received into the faith of Christ, and accepted of God, as a pledge that he will hereafter, on their conversion, receive again the whole nation. Just as his favour to Abraham and the patriarchs, *the root* of the nation, is a pledge of his favour to *the branches*, their posterity.

original Jewish church, to grafts or branches inserted on an ancient stem. These branches do not nourish the stem: they derive their new vigour from the root to which they now belong, and must not forget from what a wild and fruitless stock they had been taken.

17. *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

18. *Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.*

19. *Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in.*

20. *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.*

21. *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

22. *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

23. *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.*

24. *For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?*

Here then is the purpose of all spiritual privileges. The purpose is the same as that of the husbandman, who expends his labour upon the soil, or inserts his graft into the tree. He expects a return.

Long and long before, Isaiah had reproved the Israelites under a like example.⁶ “Now, O inhabi-

⁶ Isa. v. 3, 4.

tants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard. What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Whether in the case of nations or of individuals, the mercy of God must meet with a return on the part of man. Otherwise his unmerited *goodness* must give way to his just *severity*. The Christian belongs to a stock which is *wild by nature*, and is *grafted contrary to nature into a good tree*. "I am the vine," says our Lord, "and ye are the branches." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit."⁷

Behold, therefore, the goodness of God, who hath taken thee from the stem which was fit only to be cut down, and given thee a place in the vineyard of the Lord. *If thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* *Be not high-minded, but fear,* and watch, and pray, "lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."⁸ *For if God spared not the natural branches,* the ancient people, *take heed lest he also spare not thee.* "All these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."⁹

⁷ John xv. 5—8.

⁸ Heb. iv. 11.

⁹ 1 Cor. x. 11.

LECTURE XXXIII.

THE FUTURE FAITH AND RESTORATION OF THE JEWS.

ROMANS xi. 25—36.

25. *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

26. *And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*

27. *For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

28. *As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.*

29. *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

Here Paul declares the mystery which had been revealed to him. He had already expressed it at Antioch; saying to the Jews who opposed him, (Acts xiii. 46,) “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us.” “And they will hear it.” *Blindness hath happened unto Israel.* But the eyes of the Gentiles are opened, to see what Israel

will not see: “the things belonging to their peace.” They then are admitted to the place which hitherto the Jews have held. They which were not God’s people, are now “the people of God.”¹

This part of the divine counsels was daily accomplishing when Paul wrote: and soon after was completely manifested by the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. As concerning the present propagation of the Gospel, they *were enemies*—God treated them as such—for the *Gentiles’ sake*: the rejection of the Jew was the admission of the Gentile. It was not necessarily so: both might have been admitted: but it was so in fact. The Jew lost what the Gentile gained.

Still *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*. They are founded on counsels immutable. The Jews are still *beloved for the fathers’ sake*: and the original *election* must stand good in the family of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. The blessing is in abeyance: not taken finally away. For this also was revealed to Paul. When the *fulness of the Gentiles be come in*, and the Gospel has been preached to all nations, the favour of God shall be restored to his ancient people. That which Zechariah has predicted shall be fulfilled, (Zech. x. 6.) “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them: for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord God, and will hear them.” Or as Hosea has still more fully described the case, (Hos. iii. 4, 5,) “The children of Israel shall abide many days without a

¹ Ch. ix. 25, 26, from Hosea.

king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward, shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.” *And so all Israel shall be saved:* be converted to the faith, which now they reject and refuse: *as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob;* for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.²

Further, as it was ordained that the present blessing to the Gentiles should come to them through the Jews: so likewise the future blessing to the Jews should reach them through the Gentiles.

30. *For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:*

31. *Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*

32. *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.*

God has for a while *concluded them all in unbelief,* permitted a veil to be spread over their hearts, that in the end he *might have mercy upon all:* admit to his covenant of grace both Jews and Gentiles. And of this blessed consummation ye Gentiles shall be the instruments. Through the mercy enjoyed by you, mercy shall extend to them.

After eighteen hundred years, we begin to see the accomplishment of these words. It is indeed but the dawn of what we hope may end in perfect day. But

² This interpretation of prophecy was universally received by those who lived nearest to the apostles' days.

the dawn is the beginning. Blindness is now removed, from time to time, from some of the sons of Israel: and the light does come to them, if it comes at all, through Gentile *mercy*: through the mercy enjoyed by the Gentiles, which makes them possessors of God's saving truth: and through the mercy exercised by the Gentiles, who labour to return to the children of the nation the Gospel which they received through that nation's forefathers.

What can we do, then, but exclaim with the apostle,

33. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

34. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?*³

35. *Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?*

36. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

This is the proper conclusion of every inquiry into the ways of God. The apostle had been discussing many things of great depth and mystery, which could only be referred to his sovereign will and counsel. He raises himself, and others with himself, to admiration of these counsels, as far as they are revealed to us; and warns us against desiring to seek farther. As Job had said before, “Canst thou by searching find out God?” *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*⁴ Suppose a vast army, in some long campaign. What could a spectator know of the plan of the commander, from the

³ Isa. xl. 13, 14.

⁴ Job v. 9; xi. 7.

march of a single day? Suppose a ship, on a voyage round the world. Who could judge of its destination, from the course of a few hours? The plan by which God governs the world, the chart by which its movements are directed, can never be made clear to us. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?* Our wisdom is to say with the Psalmist,⁵ “Lord my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”

And then, from things too high for us, from general views too extensive for our field of vision, St. Paul brings us back to those individual mercies of which each man may be conscious. *Who hath first given to the Lord, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?* Who, when he looks towards himself, has anything to claim from God? Who has not everything to acknowledge? And yet we no more understand how much we have to be thankful for, than we comprehend the whole of God’s counsels respecting us. The watchfulness of his providence, the extent of his grace we shall never see, till, with enlarged faculties and unclouded vision, we are able to look back upon the course we have traversed, the dangers from which we have been preserved, or the trials which have been made a blessing to us. Those who are permitted to attain “that world and the resurrection from the dead,” will all unite in one common strain of praise: “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God.”⁷ *For of*

⁶ Ps. cxxxii. 1.

⁷ Rev. vii. 12.

him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

LECTURE XXXIV.

THE DEVOTION OF THE HEART TO THE SERVICE
OF GOD, THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE.

ROMANS xii. 1—8.

1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

2. *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

From among the Jewish people, now no longer “the people of God,” there was “a remnant,” as we have seen, “according to the election of grace.” To these Paul was now writing, who had received Jesus as the Messiah, and were united with the Gentile converts as a body of believers. To these he now points out the duties to which they were called. He begins with a thought familiar to them. They had been used to offer sacrifice. They had been used to acknowledge that their souls were due to God, having been forfeited by their trespasses, and to bring their victim to the altar, beseeching him to receive it in their stead. This type of “Him who was to

come," had been fulfilled. Christ by his one sacrifice of himself once offered had made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all men, and therefore for their sins.¹ For by their faith they had claimed to themselves the merit of this sacrifice. "The Lord had laid on him the iniquity of them all."²

The heifer and the lamb, therefore, were required of them no longer. But a different and a better offering was required. They should *present their own bodies as a living sacrifice*: not like the victim which was slain; not a dead or formal obedience; but a warm, a living sacrifice, a heart breathing with fervent prayer, and flowing with abundant love. And, again, a *holy* sacrifice; as the animal offered was to be perfect, the best of its kind, a male of the first year, and without blemish:³ so must the Christian "cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord."⁴ Such a sacrifice is *acceptable to God*, who had redeemed them for this very purpose, that there might be such a people. And such a service is a *reasonable service*: the service of beings whom God has made to differ from the rest of the creation, that they might know, and love, and honour, and obey their Maker. Surely when we consider who and what we are, nothing else is reasonable; no other way of life is rational, except that we *be not conformed to this world*, fashioned according to the pursuits, and thoughts, and habits of those who look for nothing beyond, *but be transformed by the renew-*

¹ This is Paul's own conclusion, Heb. ix. 26—28; x. 12.

² Is. liii. 6.

³ Lev. i. 3.

⁴ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

ing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. The natural man is conformed to this world. It must be so. He must be changed, formed again after a new plan. The mind of Zaccheus, whilst living in the habits of other publicans, with money as his chief object, was *conformed to this world.*⁵ When he entered on a different course, restoring to every man his due, and sharing his possessions with his neighbour, he was *transformed by the renewing of his mind:* and not his own will, but the *good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God* became his rule. And the same principle was to direct and govern them all in their various duties and capacities. God “divides to every man severally as he will:” but he has one purpose regarding all: that they exercise the talents entrusted to them as men who have an account to render.⁶

3. *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*⁷

4. *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:*

5. *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

6. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

⁵ See Luke xix. 2—8.

⁶ Ib. 12—26.

⁷ *Faith, as the cause, seems to be put here for the grace which is its effect, and springs from it: as afterwards in ver. 6; let us prophesy according to the proportion, or measure, of faith given to us, from which our ability to prophesy proceeds. This is the ancient interpretation.*

7. *Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching:*

8. *Or that he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

This is a beautiful description of a community of Christians, having different gifts and different offices: but all exercising them in obedience to God, to promote the welfare of those around them. Just as the limbs and senses of the body act in divers ways, but serve to the same end: the eye points out what the feet reach and the hands handle; and thus the object is gained, and the office of each member is fulfilled. The apostle begins with the head: issues his first instructions to the leading or ruling portion of the community: the *prophet*, or the expounder of Scripture, must be faithful: the *minister* or deacon, laborious: those employed in *teaching* the younger or more ignorant, and they that offer *exhortations* to the careless or the afflicted, must be earnest in the performance of their work. They that *gave*, imparted bounty, should distribute with a simple mind: they who were called to preside or *rule*, take diligent care that none were overlooked or despised: and they that *showed mercy*, either by relieving wants or comforting the sick, should make their kindness a free-will offering: for all charity has a double value when it is administered *with cheerfulness*.

Persons who act thus, are as *one body in Christ*, who has united them to himself by his Gospel: and like *many members in one body*, they contribute to the mutual welfare, being *every one members one of another*, and supplying that which is needed by the

whole. And so each man, in his own case, *proves what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God*, and presents himself as that *living sacrifice* which is demanded of him. Abraham, when it was required, brought his son Isaac, “whom he loved, and laid him upon the altar which he had built,” and was prepared to devote his only son to the claim of God.⁸ That would have been a costly but not a *living sacrifice*. What the Christian must offer is a *living sacrifice*, a *reasonable service*; doing the will of God from the heart, in whatever station he may be called to fill: whether it be appointed him to teach or to learn, to speak or to hear, to govern or to obey, to receive mercy or to exercise it, “doing all to the glory of God.” Such is the service which reason pays, and reason sanctions: that we live to him who gave us being; that we submit our faculties to the command of him who endowed us with them, and who expects to receive again “his own with usury.”⁹

LECTURE XXXV.

THE CONDUCT REQUIRED OF CHRISTIANS.

ROMANS xii. 9—21

9. *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

⁸ Gen. xxii. 1—13.

⁹ See Luke xix. 23.

11. *Not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord ;*
12. *Rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing instant in prayer ;*
13. *Distributing to the necessity of saints ; given to hospitality.*
14. *Bless them that persecute you : bless, and curse not.*
15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*
16. *Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

When we read this description of what a Christian community ought to be, we seem to be transported to a different world. Certainly ours would be a different world, if men were governed by these precepts, and lived according to them. Yet there have been examples of the character here set forth ; and in the grace of God there is provision for producing it.

Abraham was *kindly affectioned* towards Lot, when he said, the land being too scanty for them both, “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me : separate thyself, I pray thee, from me ; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right : or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.”¹ Thus did the elder *prefer in honour* the younger, giving him the priority ; and instead of infringing another’s right, resigning his own just claim.

Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, had profited by his master’s example : he showed himself *not slothful in business*, but *fervent in spirit*.² When admitted into

¹ Gen. xiii. 7—9.

² Gen. xxiv. 33.

the house of Laban, “there was meat laid before him. But he said, I will not eat till I have told my errand.” And whilst faithful to his earthly lord, he was at the same time *serving the Lord* of heaven. For we find him praying, “O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham.”³

Paul himself, with his companion Silas, was among those who could be *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer*. At Philippi, having suffered many stripes, and been thrust into the inner prison, they had much to render them dejected. But the history relates, that “at midnight Saul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them,”⁴ thus practising the precepts which they gave to others.

The Christians at Antioch *distributed to the necessity of saints*, when “every one according to his ability sent relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea,”⁵ then suffering under the miseries of famine. And Paul speaks of many, who being *given to hospitality*, were “fellow-helpers of the truth:” like Phœbe, who had been “a succourer of many, and of himself also:”⁶ or like the brethren of Puteoli, with whom he “tarried seven days as he went towards Rome.”⁷

Stephen has taught us, by a memorable example, what it is to *bless them which persecute you, to bless and curse not*; when “he knelt down, and prayed” for

³ Gen. xxiv. 12.

⁴ Acts xvi. 23—25.

⁵ Acts xi. 29.

⁶ Ch. xvi. 1, 2.

⁷ Acts xxviii. 14.

those who were inflicting a sudden death upon him, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”⁸

The Lord himself *rejoiced with them that do rejoice*, when he performed his first miracle on the festive occasion of a marriage.⁹ And when he sympathised with the lamentation of those whom he loved, at the grave of Lazarus, he has shown us how to *weep with those who weep*.¹ And certainly the example of Him, who “when he was rich, for our sakes became poor;” who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister”—his example may teach all to disregard *high things*, to *descend to men of low estate*, not to cherish lofty conceits of themselves.

For so, and so only, will “the same mind be in them, that was in Christ Jesus.”² This is the secret source from which such dispositions are derived. It is only as bearing his yoke, who was “meek and lowly in heart:” as imitating him, who must ever be “about his Father’s business:” as “seeking first the kingdom of God,” and having the affections there: as following his steps, who “loved us and gave himself for us:” it is only thus, that we can be *kindly affectioned one to another*: or diligent in the business of our stations: or *patient in tribulation*: or liberal in bounty: or gentle and forgiving: or so minded towards all men, as those who love their neighbour as themselves.

Such, moreover, is the world in which this character is to be maintained, that opposition, ill-treatment,

⁸ Acts vii. 60.

¹ John xi. 33—35.

⁹ John ii. 1—11.

² Phil. ii. 5.

must be expected, and provided for. Instructions are given on this head also.

17. *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

18. *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

19. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.*

20. *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

21. *Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.*

By precepts like these the natural disposition is restrained, which injured pride excites to hatred and revenge. “Instead of the thorn comes up the fir tree, and instead of the briar comes up the myrtle tree;”³ instead of violence and enmity, gentleness and peaceableness prevail. What the natural disposition prompts, was shown by David in the case of Nabal. He had been refused the aid which he had a right to claim, and resolved to *avenge himself*.⁴ “So, and more also,” (he vowed,) “do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave aught that pertain to Nabal by the morning.” Thus he was *overcome of evil*. He was afterwards brought to a better mind; learnt *not to recompense evil for evil*: and said to Abigail his counsellor, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.”

³ See Is. lv. 13.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxv. 2—35.

The lesson was not lost upon him. Pursued by Saul with three thousand chosen men, David and his captain Abishai, “came upon the people by night:⁵ and behold, Saul lay sleeping within the tent, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not:—As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.”

Here he *overcame evil with good*: and acted on the maxim, *Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.*⁶ “Say not thou, I will recompense evil: but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.” *So doing*, if thine enemy still persecute thee, as Saul still persecuted David, *thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.*⁷ Thine enemy makes his case more heinous, if having received good for evil, he still remains an enemy. “The Lord will reward him according to his works.” But thou hast “delivered thy soul,” in striving, *as far as lieth in thee, to live peaceably with all men.*⁸

⁵ 1 Sam. xxvi. 2—11. ⁶ Deut. xxxii. 35—43; Ps. xciv. 1.

⁷ Taken, together with the preceding precept, from Proverbs xxv. 21, 22. See Scott’s remarks on this passage.

⁸ 2 Tim. iv. 14.

LECTURE XXXVI.

OBEDIENCE TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT ENJOINED.

ROMANS xiii. 1—7.

1. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*

Our Lord had said to his disciples, (Matt. xxiii. 10,) “Be not ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ.” These words might be so misinterpreted, as if they were exempt from submission to lawful and constituted authorities. It was not unlikely that they should be so misinterpreted. The Jewish nation had always been proud of their freedom. They boasted, “We be Abraham’s children, and were never in bondage to any man,”¹—long after it had ceased to be true, and when they had forfeited through disobedience the protection of their heavenly King. Many amongst them treated it as an intolerable grievance, that they should be forced to pay tribute to Cæsar.² Others, too, might be led by their natural temper to resist all earthly power, and pretend that it was their duty or their privilege, to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.”³

St. Paul corrects this error. It is the will of God that men should be under authority. *The powers*

¹ John viii. 33.

² Matt. xxii. 17.

³ Gal. v. 1.

that be are ordained of God. It is the appointment of his providence, in conformity to which the world is governed. The child is under the authority of its parent. The servant is in subjection to his master : the family to its head : the wife to her husband. And so in civil concerns, and the affairs of a nation. All cannot govern ; still less can all remain ungoverned, to follow their own ways. Some must have authority for the benefit of the whole. Therefore *the powers that be are ordained of God.* In one sense, no doubt, they are “ the ordinance of man,” as St. Peter calls them :⁴ individually they are appointed, not as Saul by God himself to be king of Israel, but by man for his own convenience’ sake, and according to the usage of the country : Solomon reigns, because he is the son of David ; Cæsar rules, because the people consent to obey him ; and Festus or Felix rule, because Cæsar commits the government into their hands : still it is God’s ordinance that there should be kings and governors, and that they who are kings and governors should be obeyed.

2. *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God : and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

They that resist, shall justly lie under condemnation, both from God and man. Man will condemn them as disobedient subjects ; and God will not defend them, though professing to be his servants, if they oppose the earthly government which he has ordained.

Yet we find the apostles, (Acts v. 29,) when for-

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

bidden by the high-priest and the council to preach at all or teach in the name of Jesus, answering and saying, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” They had a special commission, to declare “the things which they had seen and heard.” And many Christians, in the days of persecution, were ordered by the civil power to do what the command of God forbade. They were ordered to blaspheme the name of Christ : they were ordered to offer sacrifice to idols. They, too, were obliged to say, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” For he had declared, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Paul does not think it needful to provide for cases such as these. In the ordinary course of things, the duty of the Christian will be submission, not resistance ; compliance, not refusal. The example was set by our Lord himself. When tribute was demanded of him, he proved that he might claim exemption : yet said, (Matt. xvii. 27,) “Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up ; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money ; that take, and give unto them for thee and me.”

Paul had said, that government was *ordained of God*. And, being God’s ordinance, it must be *for good* : it is what the safety of life and property demands, through man’s corruption, which must be thus restrained from violence and injustice.

3. *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:*

4. *For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

5. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.*

If, indeed, a Christian *does that which is evil*, he has reason to be *afraid of the power*; and he ought to suffer by it: the ruler is *the minister of God to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*.

The need of such cautions has been proved by sad experience. Sometimes the pretext of religion has been used to cloke and screen offenders; and the influence of the Church has been employed to exempt her ministers from the authority of the civil power. So little can man be trusted: so needful is it that he should be warned: *Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake*: not only from the fear of man, but from the fear of God: whose will it is that his people should “obey magistrates, and be ready to every good work: not brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.”⁵

In the usual course of things, such peaceable conduct is its own reward. St. Peter was able to put the question to the Christians whom he addressed: “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?”⁶ Just as Paul here, *Wilt thou not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.*

He himself experienced that there may be exceptions to this rule. Remonstrance may be used, as Paul remonstrated against the unlawful violence of

⁵ Tit. iii. 1, 2.

⁶ 1 Pet. iii. 13.

the Roman officer.⁷ Appeal may be made, from the injustice of one magistrate to the discretion of another: as Paul, again, used the right belonging to him, and instead of exposing himself to the sentence of the Jewish council, appealed to the emperor at Rome.⁸ But the general rule is, that the servant of the Lord will not strive, but be gentle and long-suffering, “committing himself to Him that judgeth righteously:” cheerfully paying to those in authority the deference which their station demands, and readily contributing to the expenses of government the tribute by which it must be maintained.

6. For for this cause pay ye tribute also : for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.⁹

7. Render therefore to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear honour to whom honour.

The Lord himself has shown us, that this duty rests on the highest foundation. “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.”¹ And St. Peter, following the example: “Fear God: honour the king. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, but not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”²

⁷ Acts xxii. 25.

⁸ Acts xxv. 11.

⁹ i.e. The protection of *that which is good*, and *the avenging evil*.

¹ Matt. xxii. 21.

² 1 Pet. ii. 15—17.

LECTURE XXXVII.

CHRISTIAN LOVE AND HOLINESS ENJOINED AND
ENCOURAGED.

ROMANS xiii. 8—14.

8. *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

9. *For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

10. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

The precept before given—*Render to all their due*¹—reminds St. Paul of what was due universally: that benevolence which leads us to treat the wants, the wishes, the interests of another as our own. Such *love is the fulfilling of the law*: it performs voluntarily and of good will what the law makes necessary and requires. As St. James says, (ii. 8,) “If ye fulfil the royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye shall do well:” for this plain reason, that a man worketh no ill to himself, and therefore if he love his neighbour as himself, he will *work no ill to his neighbour*. Therefore *love is the fulfilling of the law*. Love will not assault a brother’s person: estrange his wife’s affections: deprive him of his

¹ τας ὀφειλας. Here, ὀφειλετε.

property, slander his reputation, or covet his possessions. So that whatever the law has commanded respecting our conduct towards others, *it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

The heart, we know, will rebel against these rules of life, and very reluctantly submit to them. So that the apostle adds reasons by which the natural rebellion of the heart may be subdued, and brought under the influence of the Spirit of God.

11. *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep ; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

12. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand ; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

13. *Let us walk honestly, as in the day : not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*

14. *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

Thus he exhorts them to arise, and *awake out of sleep*, if any were slumbering at a season when they ought to be securing their salvation. They ought to be making the most of their time; they ought to be contending earnestly against the devil, the world, and the flesh: to be doing with all their might whatever their hands find to do: whether in promoting the welfare of their fellow creatures, or subduing the proud, and selfish, and earthly propensities of their own minds. This is no time for sleeping, when a world is to be overcome: this is no time for sleeping, when eternity is to be lost or gained. Still less is it

a time for indulging in those things which God has forbidden, and which must destroy their future hopes. They were not in a state of darkness: the light had shone upon them, displaying “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Therefore they should *put on the armour of light*: clothe themselves with the light of knowledge and of grace, which would secure them against harm: *the works of darkness* were for those on whom “the true light” had not shined: not for those who had been called to holiness, and ought to “walk as children of light.”²

And as it is encouragement to one engaged in a contest, to know that victory is near; or to one striving for the prize of speed, that he has nearly reached the goal, the sight of which redoubles his exertions: so the apostle gives encouragement; saying, *our salvation is now nearer than when we believed*, when we first entered upon the life of faith in the Son of God. *The night is far spent*, the night of this dreary pilgrimage: *the day is at hand*, the “perfect day” of heavenly glory. *When we first believed*, we had a long career before us, in which to endure hardness, to deny ourselves, to strive against sin, to remain painfully on the watch against all the wiles of the devil. *Now is our salvation nearer*, by all the interval which has been so spent: now is the eternal day brought more nigh, by all the period of darkness which we have been passing through. Now, therefore, there is especial encouragement to take heed to ourselves; to *walk honestly*, as faithful disciples of the Lord, whose name we bear; *not to make provision for the flesh*, to fulfil the lusts thereof, but to

² See a like argument, Eph. v. 8—11.

“ follow after holiness,” as he who hath called us is holy: that those things be not lost which have been already wrought in us,³ but that we “hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end,” and press onward to the mark for the prize of our high calling.

The sentiment of the apostle here shows us in what light death will be viewed, by those who have rightly understood the nature of life. They will regard it as *salvation*; deliverance from dangers which threatened them as long as they were in the world; release from labours which they could never remit or relax whilst clothed in the body of corruption, and assailed from within and from without with evil. They might have just confidence, that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” and that “He who had begun a good work in them, would perform it unto the end.”⁴ Still there is but one way in which their calling and election could be made sure:⁵ and they would feel the flesh lusting against the Spirit, “the law in their members” drawing them back, and on every occasion of weakness or temptation, ready to “bring them into captivity to the law of sin.” As whilst the Israelites contended against Amalek, so long as Moses’ hands were lifted up, Israel prevailed:⁶ but still there was no rest, no remission, no comfort, till at the going down of the sun Joshua utterly discomfited Amalek:—so is there “rest for the people of God,” when their sun is nearest its going down. Then their “warfare is ac-

³ 2 John 8.

⁴ Ch. xi. 29; Phil. i. 6.

⁵ 1 Pet. i. 10.

⁶ Ex. xvii. 11—13.

complished :" their trials are at an end, and their salvation is perfected : and they can exclaim with our apostle himself : " I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." " Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷

LECTURE XXXVIII.

JESUS CHRIST THE CHRISTIAN'S JUDGE AND LORD.

ROMANS XIV. 1—9.

1. *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*
2. *For one believeth that he may eat all things : another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*
3. *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not ; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth ; for God hath received him.*
4. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up : for God is able to make him stand.*

We read in the Acts, that after the message carried by Peter to Cornelius, his Jewish brethren

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 6—8 ; 1 Cor. xv. 57.

"contended with him, saying, (Acts xi. 2—3,) Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." Peter explained his reason. By the law of Moses, certain kinds of food were forbidden. But God had now revealed to him that these outward distinctions were done away: and that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."¹

But all could not admit this saying. Prejudices which have been long indulged, habits which we have followed from our youth, can hardly be laid aside. Many of the Jews, though converted to the faith of the Gospel, still reverenced so highly the law in which they had been brought up, that whilst living among Gentiles, they *ate herbs* only; would taste no meat at all, lest unawares they should partake of meat that was unclean.² On the other hand, many of the Gentiles, not content with enjoying the liberty granted them, blamed their Jewish brethren, and treated them with contempt, because of their attachment to ancient rules. This caused dissensions; engendered bad spirit; injured brotherly love. The apostle restrains such feeling, and tells these Roman Christians, that it would be better to conform to one another's prejudices, than to endanger charity, or provoke an unfriendly temper in matters of no real consequence. A man who used all kinds of food without scruple, might do so, and please God; *God hath received him.* And a man who abstained from certain kinds of food for conscience' sake, might equally please God; *God would receive him also.*

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 4.

² See Lecture on Acts x. 9—16.

Let neither despise the other. *To his own master he standeth or falleth.*

It was the same with regard to days. Besides the sabbath days, the Jews observed the new moons, together with many festivals appointed by the law, which were not binding upon Christians. Here also was a matter of indifference, and not of *doubtful disputation.*

5. *One man esteemeth one day above another : another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.³*

6. *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord ; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*

7. *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*

8. *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

9. *For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

Thus the discussion of a subject in which we are not immediately concerned, leads to a sentence in which all are closely interested. *None of us liveth unto himself. We live unto the Lord.* So Paul describes the character of Christians. Is it then their character? Looking into the world of those who profess and call themselves Christians, can it be

³ So Col. ii. 16. “Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days : which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.”

said, *None of us liveth unto himself?* In what we leave or follow, in what we seek or avoid, in what we abstain from or indulge in, is it true that none of us considers his own interest or inclination, but what he is *fully persuaded in his own mind* to be the will of God concerning him? The man lives to himself, who says, (James iv. 13,) “To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.” The man lives to himself, who says, (Luke xii. 19,) “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” And is this uncommon? How few act otherwise, even if they do not put their purpose into words! Might it not be more justly said, Every one of us liveth unto himself: follows his own interests, regardless of his neighbour's, studies his own will, without inquiring into the will of God?

When this can be said of any one—(alas! of how few can anything else be said!) the purpose of Christ Jesus in redeeming to himself a people has not taken proper hold upon the heart. That purpose is plainly declared. *To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.* That as he gave himself for man, so man should give himself to him: and make it the maxim by which he is governed, “that they which live,” live to God through his death, “should live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.” Then he is *Lord both of the dead and living.* He is Lord of the living, when they place themselves under his care: like “James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother,” whom he called, “and they

immediately left the ship, and their father, and followed him.”⁴ He continued their Lord when they refused to leave him, although others went away and walked no more with him:⁵ but they said, “Lord to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” He was their Lord, they *lived to him*, when they went forth at his command, and preached the gospel to every creature. And so he is the Lord of every man, who takes up his yoke, and learns of him, and can say with Paul, “To me to live is Christ. The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”⁶ He is my Lord, and I am doing his work, while I am exercising my profession, employing my fortune, conducting my family, using my influence, occupying my time and talents in such manner as I believe to be conformable to his will. When any man thus fulfils the obligations of his baptism, Christ is his Lord whilst *living*. And as he is Lord over the man, so he directs also the events which concern the man, and causes them all to work towards the purpose which he has concerning him; makes them tend to his salvation. So that they who thus *live to the Lord*, die also to the *Lord*. Whether their death be ordained late or early: whether, like the same James, they are called away after a ten years’ ministry,⁸ or like John his brother, after a service perhaps of sixty years, they are still the *Lord’s*. For them, “to depart,” is “to be with Christ;” to walk with him no longer “by faith,” but “by sight;” to “know even as they are known.”

⁴ Matt. iv. 21.

⁵ John vi. 68.

⁶ Phil. i. 21.

⁷ Gal. ii. 20.

⁸ See Acts xii. 2.

We must, however, remember, that he must be loved here, if he is to be loved hereafter. Only those who have been obedient subjects to him on earth, will be admitted at last to “sit with him on his throne.” Is it not reasonable? Is anything else reasonable, than that they should be the Lord’s whilst *living*, who desire to be the Lord’s when *dying*? should prove themselves faithful here, if they are to partake of the glories of his heavenly kingdom?

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

ROMANS xiv. 10—23.

10. *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

11. *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.¹*

12. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

13. *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.*

14. *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

15. *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now*

¹ Is. xlvi. 23.

walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

This is that charity in practice, which Paul commends elsewhere in principle: that charity which “hopeth all things, believeth all things.”² Such charity is violated, when a brother is judged harshly of: unnecessarily condemned. If the Jew, under the law of Moses, had partaken of meat which that law forbade, he would have sinned; for he would have transgressed the law, and “the transgression of the law is sin.” The same Jew converted to the faith of Christ was no longer under the law. Yet he might not so fully comprehend his own liberty, as to feel himself free in this matter. Why then should the Gentile, who had no such scruples, or the Jew who had overcome them, *judge his brother and set him at nought*, because he *esteemed as unclean* that meat which from his youth he had regarded as forbidden? Having this doubt, it would be sin in him to partake of it. *To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* And the case was still worse, if a man thus disgusted his scrupulous brother, and made him think unfavorably of the Christian faith. *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat,* be offended with the liberty he sees thee using, *now walkest thou uncharitably.* Thou mayest thus turn him back from the way of life. *Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.*

16. *Let not then your good be evil spoken of:*

17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

² 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

18. *For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

19. *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

20. *For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*

21. *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

22. *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

23. *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

One who might himself *eat flesh or drink wine* innocently, might possibly, by example, lead his brother to *eat flesh, or drink wine, with offence*: i. e. doubting whether it were right to do so. Now to act against a scruple is to act against conscience, and whatever is *not done of faith*, done by a man without believing it to be right, *is sin*. What would there be of that charity which belonged to their Christian profession, if, *for meat*, i. e. rather than forego some selfish indulgence, they should *destroy the work of God*,—do an injury to the soul of one whom they induced to *eat with offence? made weak, or caused to stumble?* *Hast thou faith?* It was well: it was well to see clearly the nature of the Gospel, which is neither the abstaining from meats or drinks, nor the indulging in them. The man might be reckoned *happy* who had this faith: and was not *condemning himself*, by *allowing* in his practice what his conscience disapproved. But let their minds be turned

to higher and better things: *the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*, instead of causing offence or temptation. Let not the one party suppose that these matters were important; let not the other party give reason to suppose that liberty in these matters had any weight with them. *For the kingdom of God is not meat or drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

1. The kingdom of God is RIGHTEOUSNESS. What we seek and must attain as Christians, is a holy, pure disposition: the conformity of the whole heart to the law of God. From the moment that a man is earnest in religion, this is what he aims at and desires. He does not so soon acquire it: but he strives and prays for it; and a promise is made, that he shall not strive and pray in vain. “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:³ and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” We find our Lord declaring from the first, that in this his religion consisted. The Jews had been used to look to other things: but he assures them, “Blessed are the meek, the pure in heart, the humble:” those that “hunger and thirst after righteousness.”⁴ And so St. Paul: “In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature:⁵ a heart converted from its natural course of worldliness and sinful indulgence, and following, instead, the ways of godliness, and meekness, and patience, and holiness, and charity.

³ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

⁴ Matt. v. 2—9.

⁵ Gal. vi. 15.

Men have invented for themselves many tests, by which to judge of their own or others' religion. This is one which cannot be mistaken. "Let no man deceive you; he which doeth righteousness, is righteous."⁶ Whatever else we have, by whatever name we are called, if we have not *righteousness*, we have not the first needful evidence of any part or lot in the kingdom of God.

2. Next, the kingdom of God is PEACE. St. Paul had been speaking of disputes and jealousies. Instead of these, he tells us that they who belong to the kingdom of God are of a quiet, kind, peaceable disposition. The spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of peace. The Gospel was ushered in with a promise of "peace on earth."⁷ God declared himself ready to be reconciled to men, through Christ Jesus; and required that they should show to one another the same kindness and long-suffering which he had shown to them. And certainly there is everything in the Gospel to promote a spirit of peace among men, and to repress a spirit of discord. Discord often arises out of the affronts which one man receives from another; such as those probably met with, who differed from their neighbours about the meats they might partake of, or the days they should keep holy. But one who has the Gospel in his heart, cannot help feeling, that even if he is unjustly affronted or offended, he has himself much more offended God. If God has borne with him, ought he not to bear with his brethren?

Another cause of discord among men, is their striving after the same object, each labouring to get

⁶ 1 John iii. 7.

⁷ Luke ii. 14.

beyond his neighbour. But this rivalry is moderated, with one who is seeking first the kingdom of God. For he is constantly looking forward to the time, when all this will avail him nothing. “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”⁸

Another cause of difference among men, is their jealousy and envy of each other: of another’s knowledge, or another’s honours, or another’s gains. But one who belongs to the kingdom of God, loves his neighbour as himself: and does not therefore grudge him what he knows, or what he gains; does not envy him if he is praised and honoured.

The Gospel, therefore, promotes peace, by cutting off the root from which discord springs. And that peaceable spirit which a man feels towards others, comes back upon himself: he is freed from those angry and discontented passions which destroy the comfort of the soul. What more miserable to the person who feels them, than envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness? Such an one’s heart is in a continual storm. But such passions have no place in the kingdom of God. Therefore *the kingdom of God is peace.*

The last sign which Paul here mentions of the kingdom of God, is JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST. The Holy Ghost takes up his abode with those who are trusting in Christ. And in the heart where he dwelleth, there is both peace and joy. For he is “the Comforter.” He soothes the heart with a hope of pardon and acceptance with God. He “bears wit-

⁸ 1 John ii. 17.

ness with our spirits," that we are received as children of God through Christ Jesus: and fills us with comfort like that which the apostle himself experienced, when he said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."⁹ He also sheds joy over our hearts, by enabling us to make head against sin, our greatest enemy. Nothing except sin can be the cause of lasting sorrow to the Christian. But the aid of the Holy Spirit gives us victory over sin: and hence comes joy to the heart. Not that joy which is shown in loud and noisy mirth; not perhaps that joy which can be discoursed of to another, or expressed in words; but a pure and holy joy notwithstanding: a joy arising from just confidence that our souls are committed to God, and safe in his hands; and that as long as we continue faithful, whatever befall us here is only part of a mysterious plan which is designed to lead us to everlasting glory.

Thus plainly are we told, what the kingdom of God does not consist in. Not in outward things or observances. These may be ours, and yet we may not be within the kingdom. The things really needful, are *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. These, therefore, are the things to seek. *Righteousness*, by the word of God, by self-inquiry, by prayer, by watchfulness, by self-denial: and *peace*, by *following after the things that make for peace*, and avoiding all those evil affections and desires by which peace is disturbed. In proportion as we advance in this

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 12.

righteousness and peace, will be our *joy in the Holy Ghost*. For to advance in them, is to be triumphing over the enemies of our salvation; and this is cause of joy. It is to be proceeding towards a state of eternal holiness and happiness; and this is cause of joy. And it is the Holy Spirit who gives this victory, and leads onward in the way: therefore such *joy* is in *the Holy Ghost*. Lord, evermore give us this joy!

LECTURE XL.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO MUTUAL LOVE AND FORBEARANCE.

ROMANS xv. 1—7.

1. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*
2. *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*
3. *For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*
4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

The difficulty about which St. Paul was writing, belonged only to that time: whether Christians might eat what had been offered to idols in sacrifice. He leaves us a precept which is binding at all times. Let every one of us consider his neighbour's welfare, rather than his own pleasure or inclination. And as

this is not our natural disposition; as every one by nature “looks at his own things, not at the things of others;” he gives us also a motive for this, which ought to be universal and sufficient. *For even Christ pleased not himself: but as it is written of him in prophecy, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*¹ Christ was reproached and reviled: bitter mockings and scoffings fell on him, which our sinfulness, not his innocence, deserved. Is not this “an example, that we should follow his steps,” and every one of us be ready rather to benefit others, than to please ourselves?

And here we are taught, incidentally, the value of the Scriptures, and the use we ought to make of them. In reading the prophecies which relate to the Lord Jesus, we should see his patience, his self-denial, and strive to make that character our own. But more than that, *Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* In the history of God’s people, the Christian is sure to find what may benefit, instruct, and support him, under any circumstances, and in every state of mind. He will see how the Lord looks down from heaven, and watches for the season when it is needful he should interpose: how he succoured Hagar in the wilderness:² how his angels met Jacob in his perplexity, at Mahanaim:³ how he answered at Shiloh the prayer of Hannah:⁴ how he supported Elijah in the hour of his despair.⁵ And

¹ Ps. lxix. 9.

² Gen. xxi. 17.

³ Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

⁴ 1 Sam. i. 9—18.

⁵ 1 Kings xix. 4—8.

thus through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we have hope : hope that God, who has brought so many of his servants from the beginning of their spiritual life to its blessed termination, will support us also to the end of our trials, and never leave us till the everlasting inheritance is ours.

But Scripture will not be thus turned to our own case, and made to suit our need ;—we shall read it, as most persons would read the sentence which Paul had quoted from the Psalms, and not perceive its force ;—unless our hearts are opened to understand and apply the word. The well of water which restored life to Hagar and her child, was within her reach hard by : she was fainting, while all that she wanted was at hand, and she knew it not, till “God opened her eyes, and she saw the well of water.”⁶ And thus in regard to the things aforetime written for our learning. He, by whom they were written, must teach us how to read them. And therefore Paul, having thus directed us to the Scriptures for hope and support, proceeds to add,

5. *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus :*

6. *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

7. *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

It may be revolting to the prejudices of some, when the Jew and the Gentile are seated at the same table, and partake of the same meats. It may affront the self-love of many, that “God has granted

⁶ Gen. xxi. 19.

unto the Gentiles repentance unto life,”⁷ and “ puts no difference between us and them.”⁸ But overcome these feelings: and *receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.* The mercy of Christ has made no distinction. He has received the Gentiles, who had been worshipping the creature instead of the Creator.⁹ He had received the Jews, who had “made void through their traditions the commandments of God,”¹ by which they were raised above other nations. Wherefore do ye also *receive one another, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.*

We may be surprised that such repeated exhortations were needed, before the Jew could be persuaded to become like-minded towards the Gentile. The parable which describes the elder son as indignant because his prodigal brother was received home with kindness, might seem to represent a nature unusually severe.² But he who uttered it, “knew what was in man;” and only described the character of the Jews to whom he spoke, and who felt when the Gentiles were treated as God’s people, just as the elder brother felt when the prodigal was welcomed home and pardoned. “Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.”³ So Peter was upbraided by his brethren. And he defended himself by explaining how he had been instructed by a vision to do that which otherwise he could not have ventured to do. He did not plead with his brethren, Has not God “made of one blood all

⁷ Acts xi. 18.

⁸ Acts xv. 9.

⁹ Ch. i. 25.

¹ Mark vii. 13.

² Luke xv. 25—32.

³ Acts xi. 3.

the nations upon earth?" Shall Christ have died for one nation alone? But he did not attempt to satisfy them, except by "rehearsing the matter from the beginning," and showing how God had proved to him, what before he never had conceived, how "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."⁴ And now Paul is obliged to repeat his instructions and exhortations, that there might be no murmurings or divisions between the two parties of which the christian church was everywhere composed, and more especially at Rome. He acknowledges their prejudices; and only beseeches them to lay aside the feelings which opposed their cordial union. He urges the strongest motive: *as Christ received us.*

At all times, this is the reason why the Christian should be patient, forbearing, long-suffering towards others: because Christ has been mercifully disposed towards him. There might have been abundant grounds (every one's conscience will suggest them) why Christ might not *have received* him, but counted him unworthy of the divine favour: but if he has overlooked them all, and if the man is now enjoying the light of God's countenance, let him imitate the kindness shown him, and look upon a brother with that tenderness and good will which is due to every soul. Due to every soul for its own sake. Due to every soul, for the glory of God: who is magnified and receives fresh honour, whenever a new subject is added to his kingdom, and they who have walked in darkness are brought to see the light, and delivered from this present evil world.

⁴ Acts x. 35.

LECTURE XLI.

JOY AND PEACE THE PROPER EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

ROMANS xv. 8—13.

8. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers :

9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy ; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.¹

10. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.²

11. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles ; and laud him all, ye people.³

12. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles : in him shall the Gentiles trust.⁴

Thus Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and all our most honoured prophets, unite in foretelling a time when God would extend his favour to those who hitherto had not called upon his name ; when all the ends of the earth should look unto him, and be saved. So that if any Jew persist in harbouring enmity, and reject his heathen brother, he knows nothing at all of the purposes of the Gospel. It confirmed the promises made unto the fathers, his own

¹ 2 Sam. xxii. 50.

² Deut. xxxii. 43.

³ Ps. cxvii. 1.

⁴ Is. xi. 1—10.

ancestors; but it fulfilled, no less, the prophecies concerning the Gentiles; prophecies of which his Scriptures are full.

Let them, therefore, receive one another: and not be less forbearing towards their fellow creatures, than God had been to his undutiful children. Let that spirit be cherished among them, which is the proper spirit of the Gospel, but which cannot exist where jealousies prevail.

13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

The habitual frame of a Christian's mind should be a state of joy and peace. St. Paul implies this here: concluding his exhortations by this prayer. Let nothing interfere, none of those jealousies or enmities which arise out of disputes and disagreements, to hinder your possessing that state of mind which belongs to you as Christians, to hinder your being *filled with joy and peace in believing, and abounding in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Believing, is being a Christian: having received “the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.” And the effect of such faith, we see, should be *joy and peace*. If so, there must be something in Christian faith to produce these feelings.

There must be, first, some cause of joy. Doubtless there is so. Deliverance is a cause of joy. Let a parent who had been alarmed by the rumour of a son's death, receive the assurance of his safety. There is joy. Let two friends who had been engaged in a murderous battle, meet each other in safety and in

victory. There would be joy. Let there be deliverance from shipwreck, recovery from a dangerous sickness: these are occasions of joy.

And the Gospel is cause of joy to believers, because it offers such deliverance: because it tells of danger removed, of calamity averted: because it gives tidings of blessings bestowed, which the heart of man could never have imagined. It relieves from the wrath of God, and brings assurance of his favour.

The Philippian jailor, as described in Acts xvi., tasted, we may believe, this joy: when affrighted by a new and sudden danger, and sensibly convinced of the majesty which he had offended, the irresistible power which he had provoked, he heard the words of unlooked-for mercy: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house.” We are told, that “he rejoiced, believing in God.” He was *filled with joy through the power of the Holy Ghost*. So that it is not without reason that St. Paul expects this to be a feeling which is to have place in the Christian’s mind, and earnestly entreats the disciples to harbour nothing which would disturb it in their bosom.

He speaks, however, not of joy alone, but of *peace* also, as the effect of *believing*.

This feeling of the mind is of a different character from joy. It is of a more gentle, calm, and enduring nature. One may be represented as a temporary, transient, or occasional emotion: the other as permanent and habitual. We may find an example in the case of David, when, after long expectation

and many difficulties, he saw himself at length securely seated on the throne of Israel. (2 Sam. vii. 18.) “ Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and said; Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast also spoken of thy servant’s house for a long while to come.” This describes to us that inward satisfaction which a man enjoys, when, looking on what is past and on what is yet before him, he sees ground of comfort and reason for hope, and his mind is in peace. Though not so strong an emotion as that of joy, it is a lasting and more tranquil feeling, more suited to the condition of our ruined nature, even when that ruin has been repaired. And therefore St. Paul puts it not first, but second, in his sentence: as if implying that it is that state into which the mind should settle and subside: a state of mind produced by the presence of comfort, and the absence of fear. It is the Christian’s privilege to abound in this consolation; to be encouraged by the hope set before him; and so to possess a peace which can flow from no other source. These are thoughts which the Spirit suggests, thoughts maintained in the heart by *the power of the Holy Ghost*, which soothe the cares which might otherwise perplex, compose the fears which might otherwise disturb, relieve the trials which belong to our fallen state, and spread a healing balm over the woes to which all the sons of Adam are alike subject, but against which the Christian alone has secured a remedy.

If anything can give peace to a being so frail and corrupt as man, it must be this. He is reconciled to God: and can look up to Him as a gracious Father, under whose foresight whatever is needful to his temporal welfare shall be provided, and on whom he may confidently depend for the final salvation of his soul. This is ground of present peace: while, for the future, he may *abound in hope* of the eternal “rest which remaineth for the people of God.”

Well may he sit before God like David, and ask in grateful wonder, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father’s house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?”

There are grounds, therefore, for the prayer, that the *God of hope may fill the Christian with all joy and peace in believing*. How happy would it be, if this were the joy of which the world thought first, and this the peace which were most earnestly and commonly desired! Joy that would not disappoint, and peace that has a sure foundation!

LECTURE XLII.

PAUL EXPLAINS HIS PURPOSE CONCERNING A VISIT TO ROME.

ROMANS xv. 14—24.

14. *And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*

Thus modestly does the apostle speak of himself and his authority. Divine grace had its proper effect upon him. It did not diminish his humility. He would not boast of himself beyond his measure. Still less would he disparage the regularly appointed teachers of the Roman church. These he would rather exalt than lower in the esteem of their people. He writes, therefore, as being *persuaded that they also were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.* Still as being ordained to a special mission, to be *the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*, he had been pleading their cause with the Jewish brethren, that they might not look on them with suspicion, but treat them as having access with themselves “ by one Spirit unto the Father.”

And in this respect he had authority. Though he would not boast of his authority or put it forward, though he would not injure the credit of their ordinary teachers; he was not one of them, and had higher claims to their attention. The Gentiles were now, for the first time, offered to God’s acceptance; they who had before been reckoned as unclean, and unfit for his service, were now to be presented as a “ living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” And Paul was the high-priest, through whose hands the offering might be made. This gave him his authority; and it was well attested.

15. *Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,*

16. *That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up*

of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17. *I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.*

18. *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,*

19. *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul says,¹ “Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake: for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” Ye know how *mighty signs and wonders* I displayed the power which accompanied me. He would *not dare to speak of things not wrought by him*:—nay, by himself nothing was wrought: it was not he, but *the power of the Spirit of God*:—but he might speak of the things which *Christ wrought by him, by word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient*. Others had preached the Gospel in Italy and at Rome: he would not speak of that: but he might speak of the manner in which throughout all Greece and Asia the Gentiles had heard the word of God by his means: he might show how from Jerusalem in the east, *round about unto Illyricum* in the west, he had *fully preached the Gospel of Christ*. He had fulfilled the commission entrusted to him, “Behold, I send thee far hence unto the Gentiles;”² “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God.” And

¹ 1 Thess. i. 5.

² Acts xxii. 21; xxvi. 18.

this he had so done, that there could be no doubt to whom they owed the blessing.

20. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21. But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

The duties of a missionary and of the pastor of a flock are different. One invites into the fold: the other feeds those who are collected. Paul was a missionary. He chose rather to go where Christ was yet unknown; *was not named; lest he should build on another man's foundation:* like Solomon, of whom we may say that he built the temple on the foundation which had been laid by David, and executed the work which his father had designed.³ Paul preferred to raise the building from the ground; to fulfil the prophetic promise, that a light should lighten the Gentiles; that *they who had not heard should understand.* Had Barnabas remained at Antioch, whither he had been sent to examine and confirm the infant church there,⁴ he would have been building on the foundation laid before by the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, “when they had come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.” But it was not so when he came with Paul to Lystra;⁵ when the heathen natives called him Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius: had never heard the true God spoken of. As at Athens afterwards: when Paul began by say-

³ See 1 Chron. xxviii. xxix. ⁴ See Acts xi. 19—25.

⁵ Acts xiv. 8—12.

ing, “Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you:”⁶ that *ye who have not heard, may understand* “how God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

This, then, was the reason why Paul had not yet visited Rome. The importance of the city, and the number of disciples it contained, would have called him thither: but jealousies might have arisen among the teachers already there, who might accuse him of desiring to reap the fruit of their labours: and, at all events, other wants were greater, the wants of those still lying in heathen darkness, and worshipping the work of men’s hands.

22. *For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.*

23. *But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;*

24. *Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.*

Such was the plan in his own mind. God ordered it otherwise. He did indeed *come unto them*: but as a prisoner. He was not conducted by them in his way towards Spain; but he was conducted by them into Rome, when they met him on his journey, and comforted him by showing that the Lord had much people, and faithful people, in that city.⁷

⁶ Acts xvii. 23—31.

⁷ Acts xxviii. 15.

This change, however, though not revealed to him, did not take him by surprise. He had said whilst on his way, “Now I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.”⁸

Bonds and afflictions awaited him on earth. “But none of these things moved him.” Here was not his rest: neither was his hope here: for he knew that what awaited him hereafter, was “the crown of righteousness,” and the blessed sentence, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”⁹

LECTURE XLIII.

PAUL PURPOSES TO CONVEY TO JERUSALEM A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE CHRISTIANS OF MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA.

ROMANS xv. 25—33.

25. *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.*

26. *For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

We are told, Acts xix. 21, that “Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have

⁸ Acts xx. 22—23.

⁹ 2 Tim. iv. 8; Matt. xxv. 23.

been there, I must also see Rome." The reason is not there added, why he must first pass through Macedonia and Achaia. Here it appears that one at least of the reasons which induced him, was to receive the contribution which these Gentile Christians had made, that he might be the bearer of it to Jerusalem. We learn, too, in his epistle to the Corinthians, in what way the "alms and offerings" had been collected. (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him; that there be no gatherings when I come."

It was a novel thing. Some years before, the very name of Jerusalem could have been hardly known to the people of Corinth, or Philippi, or Thessalonica. They were separated from its inhabitants by all those things which make one nation separate from another. A sea lay between them. They spoke a different language. Many provinces must be passed over, before one from Judea could reach Philippi, or one from Corinth could reach Jerusalem. There had, too, been that which beyond other things makes a separation: there had been on the one side idolatry; on the other, the worship of the one true God, eternal in the heavens. That, however, which before had set them asunder, had now become their bond of union. Religion had connected them, and given them a mutual interest. They were alike trusting in the Son of God, as their Deliverer from the wrath to come. And the knowledge of that Saviour had come to them from Jerusalem. It was at Jerusalem that he had died, to whom they owed their spiritual life. *The poor saints* that dwelt there, were of the

nation to which the promises were made: “whose were the fathers:” who had been God’s chosen people. “Salvation was of the Jews.” Through them they had received what was beyond all price; they had received that which might bless the soul for ever. It was not much to relieve a temporal distress, in return for everlasting good. As Paul wrote to Philemon (19), “I do not say unto thee how thou owest me thine own self besides;” and canst not justly grudge the favour which I now seek from thee.

So argued the Thessalonians and Corinthians. They had received much; and would make a due return.

27. *It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

28. *When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.*

29. *And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

30. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;*

31. *That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;*

32. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*

33. *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

Paul was now going to Jerusalem. With what feelings he went, we know from his words at Cæsarea. (Acts xxi. 10—13.) “I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the

name of the Lord Jesus." For "a certain prophet, named Agabus, took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Paul, however, knew that nothing could befall him which God did not permit: and he also knew the power of fervent effectual prayer. Therefore he entreats the Roman Christians *that they strive together with him in their prayers to God, that he might be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea, and come to them with joy by the will of God, and with them be refreshed.*

He was not mistaken in foreseeing this enmity: neither was he disappointed in the effect of their prayers. The unbelieving Jews did assail him with all violence, malice, and injustice; and not content with bringing him before the council, and accusing him to the Roman governor, "more than forty banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul."¹ From all these dangers he was preserved, the hand of God visibly protecting him. And at last he did "see Rome," though not in the way that he had desired. He had hoped *by the will of God to come unto them with joy.* He did come, but as a prisoner who had appealed to Cæsar from the injustice of his countrymen. He did come, and *was refreshed.* For as he approached Rome, says the history, (Acts xxviii. 15,) "when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum and the three taverns: whom when

¹ Acts xxiii. 12.

Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage,” He came also, as he had hoped, *in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ*: showing it to be “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” “There came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.”² And though some did not believe the things spoken, others did believe: and to the Christian company which he found established at Rome he had the privilege of adding many others of his countrymen.

The providence of God continued to watch over him. He had been carried to Rome as a prisoner under accusation. Yet he still found favour. He was suffered to “dwell two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”³

Thus he was able, both by word and by example, to promote that harmony among the Roman Christians, which ought to exist among the heirs of a common salvation. The elements of union were there: those were now to worship together, who formerly might not eat together: and “Jews by nature,” were joined in fellowship with “sinners of the Gentiles.”⁴ Paul had already besought them to “receive one another, as Christ had received them.”⁵ now he could enforce his exhortation, that forgetting the things in which

² Acts xxviii. 23, 24.

³ Acts xxviii. 30, 31

⁴ Gal. ii. 15.

⁵ Ver. 7.

they differed, they should look only to those in which they mutually agreed: and whilst they served and trusted him through whom both Jews and Gentiles were reconciled to God, *the God of peace might be with them all. Amen.*

LECTURE XLIV.

THE SALUTATION OF THE APOSTLE TO MANY OF
THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS.

ROMANS xvi. 1—16.

1. *I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:*¹

2. *That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.*

3. *Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:*

4. *Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

5. *Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.*

Aquila and Priscilla had now returned to Rome. It appears where they are mentioned in the Acts, (xviii. 1, 2,) that they had left Italy in obedience

¹ Cenchrea was the seaport of Corinth, from whence Paul wrote this epistle: and Phebe is supposed to be the person who carried it to Rome, having business to transact there.

to the edict of Claudius, who had “commanded all Jews to depart from Rome.” They had accompanied Paul in many of his journeys; they were with him at Ephesus, and were made useful to Apollos, instructing him in “the way of God more perfectly”: ² they were also residing there, when he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians: ³ and they could not be assisting him in his various labours, or attending him in his many missions, without being themselves exposed to danger. Therefore he praises them, as having *for his life laid down their own necks*: risked their lives in succouring and befriending him: in obedience to the word which said, “He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.” ⁴

The lives of Aquila and Priscilla had been preserved, and they had now been permitted to return to Rome, and establish themselves there again as a Christian family. Paul salutes together with them, *the church that is in their house*, where probably not their own household only, but others with them, were accustomed to unite in prayer and thanksgiving. Amongst them was Epenetus, who like themselves had been a sojourner at Corinth, and the first convert to Paul’s teaching: so that he calls him *the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ*, ⁵ the first sheaf of the harvest which he had gathered in that field, after he had sown there the word of God. It was the earnest of many sheaves which the heavenly husbandman per-

² Acts xviii. 18—26.

³ See 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

⁴ Matt. x. 39.

⁵ The same phrase is applied, 1 Cor. xiv. 15, to the household of Stephanas. Perhaps Epenetus was one of that household.

mitted him to reap there, as the reward of his dangers and his labours.

6. *Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.*
7. *Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*
8. *Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.*
9. *Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.*
10. *Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.*
11. *Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.*
12. *Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.*
13. *Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*
14. *Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.*
15. *Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.*
16. *Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*

We observe that many of the persons of whom honourable mention is here made, are described as known to the apostle not only for their christian faith, but for the work in which they were engaged. Andronicus and Junia were *of note among the apostles*, as their fellow labourers. Urbane was Paul's *helper in Christ*. Tryphena and Tryphosa *laboured in the Lord*. The beloved Persis *laboured much in the Lord*. This was with them a matter of course. The christian converts were “not barren nor unfruit-

ful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶ Their faith set them upon a new life: and each according to their ability became active in the service of Him “who had loved them, and gave himself for them.”

There were many ways of usefulness open to all the disciples. The elder might instruct the younger. Those who were well advanced in the knowledge of the Scriptures might expound to the more ignorant the things relating to the Lord Jesus, and show how the law and the prophets were established by the Gospel. This was expected of the older members. St. Paul complains of the Hebrew Christians, that they were not capable of such service. “When for the time (he says, Heb. v. 12) ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” It was otherwise with Persis, and the rest, whom he here mentions and commends as his *helpers in Christ*, his fellow-workers. The love of Christ constrained them, and the love of their fellow creatures constrained them to testify to others the things which they had themselves received.*

Some also of those who believed, would be in possession of this world’s good. It was part of the instruction given them, not to be luxurious or self-indulgent, but “faithful stewards of God’s gifts;” to be “rich in good works; ready to distribute; willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the “time to come.”⁷ They were taught that pure religion and undefiled before

⁶ 2 Pet. i. 8.

⁷ 1 Tim. v. 18.

* See note, page 243.

God and the Father was this; “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world.” An early christian writer makes it an argument, why a christian woman should not marry an unbeliever, that she would be restrained in the fulfilment of this duty. “What heathen,” he asks, “will suffer his wife, in visiting the brethren, to go from street to street, to enter the house of strangers, and the cottage of the most destitute?”⁸ On the other hand, he reckons it among the blessings of a marriage between Christians, that the wife may visit the sick and support the needy, and distribute alms without exciting the jealousy of her husband.

Those who were most diligent in fulfilling these duties, became known to the apostle; and Paul, though he had never dwelt at Rome, was familiar with their names, and would not conclude his letter without sending them his salutation.

Still, that they were known to him, was little. It would not profit them to be approved of man, or of man’s judgment, unless that judgment had a higher sanction. That which is really important, is to be approved of God. And He has not left us to doubt of the grounds of His approval. They are revealed to us in the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”⁹

⁸ Tertull. ad Uxorem ii. 4—8. See Neander, § ii. P. 111.

⁹ Matt. xxv. 21.

LECTURE XLV.

THE BRETHREN ARE WARNED AGAINST DIVISIONS,
AND COMMENDED TO GOD.

ROMANS xvi. 17—27.

17. *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned: and avoid them.*

18. *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

19. *For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.*

20. *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

When Paul was placed on his defence before the Jewish council,¹ and perceived that one part were Sadducees who denied the resurrection, and another part Pharisees who affirmed it: he saw that his best hope of escaping their violence, was to introduce a subject of division amongst them: and he “cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question.” It had the immediate effect of diverting their minds from himself.

¹ Acts xxiii. 6—9.

“The multitude was divided, and a dissension arose” amongst those who were before united in opposing him.

Whether in a good cause or a bad, the effect of *divisions* is the same: they turn the attention from the main object. Therefore Paul warns the brethren to *mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they had learned: and to avoid them.* There were many subjects which might sow the seed of dissension. All had been going well with the church at Antioch,² when “certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” The Thessalonian disciples were “shaken in mind and troubled” by some who deceived them, teaching that “the day of Christ was at hand;”³ others dissuaded them from engaging in the business of the world.⁴ In this very Church of Rome there were some who regarded certain days; whilst others regarded every day alike: some abstained from meats, and others had no such scruple. The ill-disposed might magnify these differences, and make a party to themselves. This conduct is not of God, but a device of Satan, taking advantage of man’s corruption. *They that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.* They have private ends in view, not the cause of God. They seek gain, or they seek personal authority: and *by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* So did Korah and his company,⁵ when they “gathered themselves against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much

² Acts xv. 1.

³ 2 Thess. ii. 1—3.

⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 6—12.

⁵ Numb. xvi. 3.

upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves against the congregation of the Lord?" And Absalom used the same arts, to collect a party for himself against his father David.⁶ He *deceived the hearts of the simple*, as he stood in the gate and said, "O that I were made judge in the land, that every man that hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!"

By arts and instruments of this kind would Satan stir up the hearts of "evil men and seducers" to injure the church which he was unable to destroy. But his power was limited—a restraining hand was over him. *The God of peace*—He who has called us to present peace, and who alone can give us everlasting peace—*He shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. He should set them free from the outward enemies which would introduce *divisions and offences*, and also restrain the unhallowed tempers which would promote the success of the adversary, and give force to his temptations.

Paul had before sent greetings to the individuals at Rome who would receive his letter. He now mentions those then with him at Corinth who joined in his salutations.

21. *Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.*

22. *I Tertius,⁷ who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.*

⁶ 2 Sam. xv. 2—4.

⁷ Employed by Paul as an amanuensis to transcribe the epistle for him.

23. *Gaius⁸ mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*

24. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

25. *Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,*

26. *But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets; according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith :*

27. *To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

Thus he concludes, by “ commanding them to God, and to the word of his grace, which was able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified :” to *stablish them, according to his gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ ; according to the revelation of the mystery*, which many prophets and righteous men had desired to see, and had not seen, and to hear, and had not heard. The mystery was, “ God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.”⁹ The mystery was, that “ many should come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and should sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.”¹ The mystery was, that “ a great multitude of all nations, and kindreds,

⁸ Perhaps the person to whom St. John’s third epistle is addressed. He is also mentioned, 1 Cor. i. 14.

⁹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

¹ Matt. viii. 11.

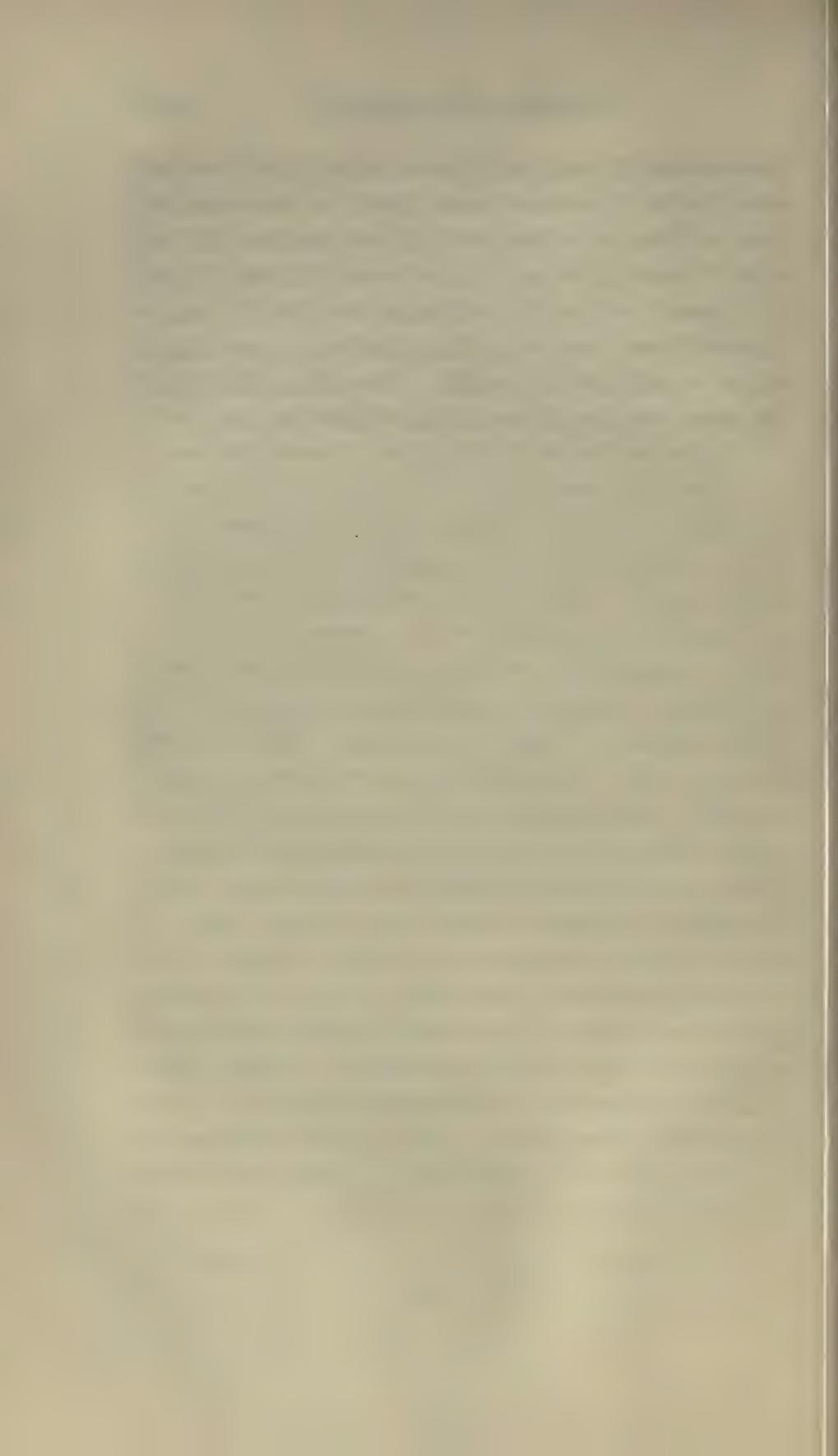
and people, and tongues,”² should be brought out of the darkness in which otherwise they would have lain, “to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.”³ This had been the will of God from the beginning. In the counsels of heaven the “Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.”⁴ It was prefigured in the Law, and hinted at by the Prophets: still it was *a mystery*: it was *kept secret*: not fully discovered or so openly declared, that all should understand: but now was *made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets*, explained by their fulfilment, and *made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith*. It had been thus made known to the Christians at Rome, who were among the first partakers of this grace. And it was a happy consideration, that they were in the hands of Him *who was of power to stablish them*. Paul took comfort in this thought. He was well aware of the dangers which assailed them. He had warned them in the course of his letter against many of the temptations by which they might be overcome. He had warned them against abusing the grace of God: he had warned them against yielding to the persecutions which they must encounter: he had warned them against harbouring jealousies, or causing mutual offence: he had warned them that “the kingdom of God was righteousness and peace,” and that its members must be pure, and holy, and patient, and humble, and kindly affectioned one towards another. But though he was of power to instruct them in

² Rev. vii. 3.

³ 1 Thess. i. 9.

⁴ Rev. xiii. 6.

these truths, he was not of power to establish them in such life and practice; and therefore he commits them to Him, in whom are “the preparations of the heart:” knowing that if they were delivered from this present evil world, and made meet for the inheritance above, not unto him, and not unto themselves, would be the praise. Therefore *unto God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.*



THE
FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

AFTER his visit to Athens, in the course of his first journey through Greece, Paul came to Corinth;¹ and took up his abode there with Aquila, one of his countrymen, who had been forced by an edict of the emperor Claudius to depart from Rome. There he preached “the gospel of the kingdom.” The Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed; so that after a while he thought it right to leave their synagogue, and teach elsewhere. Still the seed was not sown in vain. Some fell on good ground. “Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”

Thus was laid the foundation of the Corinthian church: to which, after an interval of five or six years, Paul addressed this epistle, written during his second residence at Ephesus.²

¹ A. D. about 54. See Acts xviii. 1—11.

² See chap. xvi. 8; and Acts xix. 1.

LECTURE XLVI.

CAUSES OF THANKFULNESS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.

1 COR. i. 1—9.

1. *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*
2. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*
3. *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

That a Christian company was raised at Corinth, is great proof of the divine power which attended the preaching of the apostles. Corinth was a city noted even among the heathens for luxury and licentiousness. Its inhabitants might have furnished that picture which St. Paul draws of the heathen generally in his epistle to the Romans, as being “full of all unrighteousness.” And such had been some of those whom Paul now salutes as members of a religion which required them, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present world.”³ Because “the Lord had opened their hearts, to attend to the things spoken of Paul;” had caused them to “arise, and wash away their sins, calling upon the name of

³ See ch. vi. 9—11.

the Lord." So that he could address them, as *sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*; called here to "have their fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life." Jesus Christ came into the world "to call sinners to repentance." These had obeyed the summons: and instead of being now, as formerly, "enemies of God through wicked works," were in a state to enjoy *grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Though Paul had many things to speak of, which deserved not praise but blame, he first acknowledges the comfort which he had in their faith, and the thankfulness which he had reason to feel on their account.

4. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;*

5. *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;*

6. *Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:*

7. *So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

8. *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

9. *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

He rejoices, that *the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them.*

That *testimony* is, that he is the author of salvation to all them that believe; that "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."⁴

⁴ The *testimony* here, is the same as the *record* in St. John : (1 Ep. v. 11,) here, *τό μαρτυριον*: there, *ἡ μαρτυρία*.

Now this testimony was confirmed, in the first place, when Jesus showed by his works that God was with him. The works that he did bore witness to his truth. As he said to the leper whom he had cleansed, (Matt. viii. 4,) “ Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”

The same testimony was confirmed in the apostles, when the promise which had been made was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; (Acts xi. 4;) and “ they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The words of Jesus were fulfilled, who had declared, “ Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

The testimony of Christ was confirmed in Paul himself, when his hardness of heart and unbelief was subdued, and he who had been a persecutor, and a blasphemer, and injurious, became a preacher of the faith which before he destroyed.⁵

And so the testimony of Christ was confirmed in these Corinthians, when they turned from their heathen vanities to serve the living and true God: and when, having embraced the faith, they received the gifts which are granted to faith: when they were *enriched in all utterance*: able to discourse of things which it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive, until God revealed them: *enriched in all knowledge*; able to understand those heavenly truths, which are not communicated to man by “ flesh and blood,” but only the “ Father who is in heaven” discloses. It is the promise of the Gospel that these

⁵ Acts i. 5.

signs shall belong to them that believe; signs that “accompany salvation.” And this promise was fulfilled, when the Corinthian disciples were endowed with knowledge of divine truth, and with power to utter what they knew. There was no proof of God’s favour which other churches had, and they had not. They *came behind in no gift*: and this was an evidence of the love of God towards them, and might encourage them *to wait for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to accomplish all his promises, and put an end to all their trials. What they had already experienced, gave ground of confidence that He who had called them, and whose call they had obeyed, would *confirm them unto the end, that they might be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Be blameless. Those are blameless who have done no wrong. In this sense no man living shall be justified. But they are also blameless, who are unblamed: “whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered :” “to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”⁶ And such was the hope which these enjoyed, who had been *called unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ*. Neither was it a hope which would disappoint, like many of those shadows which men pursue, and find them vain. *God is faithful, by whom they were called*. By thus choosing them as objects of his mercy, he had testified his love: and it was love which should neither change nor fail.

⁶ Rom. iv. 6, 7.

LECTURE XLVII.

WARNING AGAINST DIVISIONS AND PARTIES.

1 COR. i. 10—17.

10. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you : but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

11. *For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.*

12. *Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas ; and I of Christ.*

In the opening of his letter, Paul spoke favourably of the Corinthian church. Like a candid and faithful judge, who “hopeth all things, believeth all things,” he gives them all the credit that he can. They were wanting *in no gift* : they were *enriched in utterance, and in all knowledge.*

But he must be faithful as well as kind : and now reminds them, that such gifts, in themselves, proved little. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am nothing.”¹ And here, with all their gifts, they were in danger of failing. For they were divided into parties ; and such divisions are a great hindrance to charity. He

¹ Ch. xiii. 1.

had learnt from authority which he names, from the brethren *which are of the house of Chloe*, that they set up one teacher against another, and one apostle against another, and called themselves after him. *Every one of you saith, I am of Paul: and I of Apollo; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.* One party might boast that they had followed *Paul*, whose conversion had been so remarkable, and who had been favoured with such wonderful revelations.² Another prided themselves in *Apollo*, “an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures.”³ And others in *Cephas*, or Simon Peter, who had followed the Lord from the beginning, and testified the things which he himself had seen and heard. Another party might disregard all teachers, and say, *I am of Christ*, and despise any human aid. The mind naturally runs into these errors, which are found wherever an interest is really felt in religious things. They are tares which spring up wherever the ground is not altogether barren. We are attached to them who have conferred a benefit upon us. And the greater the benefit, the stronger the attachment. From attachment, comes preference; from preference, comparison; and this leads to *divisions*. And then that love is impaired which is the very bond of peace and of all virtues; without which religion at any time can have no healthy growth, but without which, in its infancy, it can hardly exist at all. On which account, we may believe, our Lord prayed so earnestly for his disciples, that they “might be one even as He and his Father were one:”⁴ that there might be *no divisions amongst*

² See 2 Cor. xii. 1, and 7. Gal. i. 12—19.

³ Acts xviii. 24.

⁴ John xvii. 22.

them, but that they might be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Paul remonstrates against these party feelings, and shows how contrary they were to right or reason.

13. *Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*

To be a Christian, is to be of Christ: to be of him altogether; to refer all to him; to depend for all upon him. But to say, *I am of Paul, and I of Cephas*; is to *divide Christ*: as if you could be partly his, and partly another's, and each could bear a part in your salvation. Christ is all in all, and his apostles are nothing more than his ministers, through whom you have been brought to trust in him. They were not *crucified for you*: they did not bear your sins, though they led you to him who bore them. You were not *baptized in their name*, as if your trust was to be fixed on them; but they baptized you in the name of Christ, the “only name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved.”⁵

And this leads St. Paul to congratulate himself, as if it were a happy circumstance, that so far from baptizing converts in his own name, he had not baptized at all: that was not his peculiar office.

14. *I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;*

15. *Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.*

16. *And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.*

17. *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the*

⁵ Acts iv. 12.

gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

The commission which was given to St. Paul, is related, Acts xxvi. 17. “Now I send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” In other words, to *preach the gospel*: to show how “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;” and how “he, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”⁶ Performing this appointed duty, he did proclaim these truths, for example, in this very city of Corinth. “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house.”⁷ Crispus, we may suppose, being ruler of the synagogue, was well instructed in his own Scriptures: and when convinced of Paul that all the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus, and that he was indeed “the hope of Israel,” the Messiah for whom they were looking;—he was at once prepared for baptism, like the converts on the day of Pentecost. And Paul baptized him. But it was otherwise with the many *Corinthians who hearing, believed.*⁸ They had much to learn; and a long course of instruction would be required before they were admitted to the privilege of baptism. This would have hindered the apostle in his course; this was committed to his helpers and fellow-workers,⁹ while he himself used

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 19. John i. 45.

⁷ Acts xviii. 8.

⁸ Ib.

⁹ Rom. xvi. 2, 9. Col. iii. 2. Phil. iv. 3. Philem. 24. Mr. Moffat illustrates this, incidentally, in his account of his “Missionary Labours in Southern Africa. “After the Gospel has been introduced to a town or tribe by the missionary, native assist-

the gifts bestowed on him to arouse other hearts, and influence other souls, that they might “awake, and arise from the dead, and Christ might give them light.” Therefore it so happened that of the whole Corinthian Church he could recollect none that he had himself baptized, but *Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas.* And now this was so far well, that none could say he had baptized in his own name, or led them to esteem any one as concerned in their redemption, save him whose apostle he was, and the message of whose mercy he was commissioned to declare.

Men may justly love and value those, who are the “servants of the most high God, and show them the way of salvation.”¹ But such is our nature, that what is good is closely allied to what is evil. Where there is love, there is often jealousy; and envy follows close upon admiration. These feelings must be watched against. And they will be opposed most successfully when the mind is kept most firmly intent upon the author and finisher of our faith. One chief affection precludes another. The eye which is filled with the sun’s rays, can fix on no other objects. And so

ants, by reading, teaching to read, exhorting, and a humble and devout deportment, prepare the people for greater advances in divine knowledge. So fully were we convinced of the value of such auxiliaries, that so early as 1834 we found it conducive to the interests of the mission to have recourse to native assistance, employing Aaron and Paul to catechise the people, and lead on inquirers. In 1837 some of the influential young men among the Batlaros, who were good readers, cheerfully undertook the task of instructing their neighbours, by holding service in a school. P. 589.

¹ See Acts xvi. 17.

the heart which dwells upon the offices of Christ, on his atonement as its only hope, on his intercession as daily needed before God, will regard his ministers with the esteem to which they are entitled, and no more. For “who is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed ?”² They hold the torch which leads to the palace gate, and we honour them for their office sake; but those who have entered within the portal, must pay no homage but to the king.

LECTURE XLVIII.

THE WISDOM OF THE GOSPEL NOT UNDERSTOOD BY THE UNBELIEVER.

1 COR. i. 18—25.

18. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

19. *For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.¹*

Paul had been saying, that his commission was, *to preach the gospel.* It was not his usual custom even to baptize, that he might seem to claim no special honour to himself. Nor did he use *wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect:* i. e. lest the simple truth should be obscured, by the eloquence in which it was clothed: or lest that attention should be directed towards the messenger, which ought to be devoted to his message only. If a man

² Ch. iii. 1.

¹ Is. xxix. 14.

has saved his country, ingenious arguments are not needed to prove him a great man. And therefore Paul had done no more than proclaim the *cross of Christ* to men, as their refuge from eternal death. *They that perish* because they will not repent and leave their sins, deem it *foolishness*. *But unto us which are saved, it is the power of God*: it is the fulfilment of his truth: for he has left it written, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*. This has been now accomplished; God has hid the mystery from the wise and prudent, and revealed it unto babes.² The simple have taught those truths and the simple have received them, which philosophy never discovered, and the wisdom of this world despises.

20. *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*

21. *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

The world had made much advance in knowledge; the faculties of the mind were enlarged, many excellent arts had been attained; poets wrote well, and orators pleaded well: but with all its wisdom *the world knew not God*: God *in the wisdom of his counsels* and his providence did not interpose to hinder it; so that *the world by wisdom knew not God*: knew not his nature, his will; nay, not even his being. Whether there was a God, or no, whether there were many gods or one, was matter of debate and uncertainty to the most learned. *Where then is the scribe, where is*

² Matt. xi. 25.

the disputer of this world? What has he done to benefit mankind, by removing the darkness which encompasses them? To reconcile them to God, or God to them?

But then, when these had failed, it pleased God by that preaching which some call *foolishness*, to save them that believe: to bring those who credit the glad tidings of his word to know him, and to be known and favoured by him. Of all the places famous in ancient times for learning, none was more celebrated than Athens. Yet when Paul came to Athens, as he entered into the city, he “found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God.”³ “Whom they ignorantly worshipped, him he declared unto them.” The mean despised Jew now taught the learned and proud Athenian what with all his wisdom he never had discovered; and what, if he received it, would bring salvation to his soul.

If he received it. But to this the hearts of men opposed an obstacle.

22. *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:*

23. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;*

24. *But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

25. *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

The Jews, too many of them, reject our message, and require a sign. No doubt they had a right to a sign which might prove to them that Jesus was the Messiah, and that Paul was his apostle. But the

³ Acts xvii. 22, &c. &c.

Lord had given them signs, and demanded that if they believed not his word, they would at least believe his works.⁴ “God also wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul,” and “gave testimony to the word of his grace.”⁵ They, however, required a sign of their own choosing, and closed their eyes against the proofs before them.⁶ *The Greeks, again, seek after wisdom.* They have a wisdom of their own, and try all things by its standard. Meanwhile, says St. Paul, *we preach Christ crucified.* We affirm that all men are guilty before God; that Jesus Christ has made atonement for that guilt, by dying the death of sinners; and so has reconciled to God all that commit themselves to him. This is *to the Jews a stumbling block*; an offence. They expected a Saviour, who should deliver Israel from temporal weakness and national degradation, and reign upon the throne of David:⁷ Messiah crucified “has no beauty that they should desire him.”⁸ And the Greeks treat our doctrine as *foolishness*. It tells them of things which are strange to their ears, and they will not hear. This was proved at Athens. When Paul spake “of the resurrection of the dead; some mocked; others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.”⁹ It was *to them that perish foolishness.* “Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed.” To them who were called, whether Jews or Gentiles, *Christ was the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* The *wisdom of God*, who had provided a way in which sin might be pardoned, yet not encou-

⁴ John x. 37, 38.

⁵ Acts xix. 11; xiv. 3.

⁶ Matt. xiv. 39.

⁷ Isa. ix. 7.

⁸ Isa. liii. 2.

⁹ Acts xvii. 32—34.

raged: the wicked received into favour, yet the holiness of God maintained. *The power of God*, who changed the hearts of men, and made the proud humble, the sensual pure, the covetous liberal, the lovers of this world, lovers of God. For *the foolishness of God*, i. e. what men call *foolishness*, when God is with it, is *wiser than men*; wiser than all man's devices: and the *weakness of God*, i. e. what would be weak if God did not support it, is *stronger than men*: does that which man in his highest state can neither achieve by his strength nor devise by his wisdom.

Such is the Gospel: in itself, *the wisdom of God*; in its effects, *the power of God*. If we accept it, in dependence on his wisdom, we shall feel it to be the instrument of his power: and learn by happy experience that “the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; that the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”¹

LECTURE XLIX.

THE POWER OF GOD MANIFESTED IN ESTABLISHING THE GOSPEL.

1 COR. I. 26—31.

26. *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*

One proof that the Gospel was not of man, but of God, was the nature of its doctrines. *We preach,*

¹ Ps. xix. 7, 8.

Paul had said, *Christ crucified*. This was not an argument which philosophers would understand, and must be established by some other influence than that of human wisdom.

He now brings forward another proof:—the condition of the disciples and the teachers of the Gospel:¹ not commonly persons of rank and power, but humble and unknown: such as men would be more likely to despise than to follow. *Not many* of them were wise by human teaching, or mighty by earthly power, or noble, by rank and birth; though they had that better wisdom which cometh from God, and that highest nobility which belongs to his adopted children. There were indeed amongst them Sergius Paulus, the governor of Paphos,² and Dionysius the Areopagite,³ and of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.⁴ There were not wanting some of better rank, who sought the honour which God bestows, and embraced the religion which men called foolishness. But the larger number belonged to that class which followed the Lord Jesus when the elders and Pharisees rejected him: “the common people, who heard him gladly,”⁵ had fewer prejudices, were more open to conviction, because they had less to renounce when they renounced this world. The success of a cause which was thus maintained, without those earthly means which might be expected to prevail, proved plainly that the strength of the cause was in God, and in no other.

¹ “Both teachers and disciples, of an uneducated sort.” Chrys., whose homily on this passage contains a very powerful and well-conducted argument.

² Acts xiii. 12.

³ Acts xvii. 34.

⁴ Acts xvii. 12.

⁵ Mark xii. 27.

27. *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ;*

28. *And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are :*

29. *That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

“ As Jesus stood by the lake of Gennesaret, he saw two ships standing by the lake :⁶ but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.” These were James and John, who were partners with Simon. “ And Jesus said unto Simon, From henceforth thou shalt catch men.” “ And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.” “ And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican named Levi sitting at the receipt of custom : and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, and rose up, and followed him.”⁷

Thus *God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise* : the fishermen of Galilee to teach the philosophers of Greece the way to heaven : *the weak things of the world hath God chosen* to dispute against the chief priests and scribes and rulers, and show them the true interpretation of their own Scriptures : and *base things of the world*, as the publicans ; and *things which were despised, and things which are not*, are thought nothing of, held in no more account than if they did not exist, as the Gentiles :⁸ these

⁶ Luke v. 1—11.

⁷ Luke v. 27.

⁸ 2 Esdras vi. 56. “ As for the other people which also come of Adam, thou hast said that *they are nothing*. And now, O Lord, behold, the heathen which have ever been reputed as *nothing*, have begun to be lords over us.”

hath God chosen to bring to nought things of influence, and authority, and power. And not without reason has he selected these mean instruments, and these humble persons. That no flesh should glory in his presence. That “the excellency of the power might be of God,” and not of man: that none might be able to say, By my abilities or by my authority has this been done: that the whole world might perceive how God was the author and finisher of it all.

They, however, to whom Paul was writing, had received the word as it is in truth, the word of God: and these might be satisfied, that if they had followed that which men despised, they had still followed that which God approved.

30. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:*

31. *That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.⁹*

When the land of Egypt was afflicted by famine, that famine which Joseph had been enabled to foretel, and against which he had made provision, “the people cried to Pharaoh for bread:¹ and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith unto you, do.” “And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians.” It is an example of the way in which Christ is *made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* Without him there would be, not indeed “a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:² a want of all that know-

⁹ Jer. ix. 23.

¹ Gen. xli. 55, &c.

² Amos viii. 11.

ledge which is needful that a man may serve, obey, or honour him. But he has commanded us to go to his beloved Son, and hear him, and do whatsoever he saith unto us. And it shall be our *wisdom*. In the propitiation which he offered, there is full and perfect virtue to make atonement for the sins of all men: so that we are commanded to go unto him for pardon, and he will clothe us with the garments of *righteousness*. “All fulness dwells in him;” so that in our corruption and our weakness we are to go to him, that he may open the storehouses of the Spirit, and supply us with the grace we need, and work in us *sanctification*. In him, too, we have *redemption*. He has purchased us with his own blood, and to him must we go for the title and privileges of our freedom. Thus, for ignorance, we have knowledge of the truth; are “filled with all wisdom.”³ For condemnation, we have justification; are accounted righteous before God.⁴ For corruption, we have sanctification; are “renewed in the spirit of our minds.”⁵ For bondage, we have redemption; are made “free indeed.”⁶ And all through Christ Jesus. These privileges are derived to us through him.

Two things, however, remain to be observed. First, as the Egyptians were to apply to no others, but to Joseph only: so must we apply to Jesus only. He is “the way, and the truth, and the life.” We must depend on him alone for our salvation. *That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

³ Col. i. 9.

⁴ Rom. viii. 1.

⁵ Eph. iv. 21—24.

⁶ John viii. 36.

Secondly, he is *made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* But he is not so made these to us, that his having them is to be instead of our having them: but that from him we may receive them. His righteousness, his redemption, become ours through our faith. His wisdom is not to leave us in our natural vanity and folly, but to make us “wise unto salvation.” His innocence, his perfect obedience, is not instead of sanctification in ourselves, but to “purify us, even as he is pure,” to render us “holy, as he who hath called us is holy.” “For if these things be in us, and abound, they make us to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”⁷

LECTURE L.

THE ATONEMENT MADE BY CHRIST THE SUM OF PAUL'S PREACHING.

1 COR. ii. 1—8.

1. *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.*

2. *For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

When Isaiah desired to point out to the Israelites the unreasonableness of that idolatry to which they

⁷ 2 Pet. i. 8, 9.

were so prone, he used much *excellency of speech*. He exposed the vanities by which they were deceived. (xliv. 9—20.) He described the care and skill of the workmen, who fashioneth the idol, “fitteth it with planes, marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man.” Part of the wood he uses for ordinary purposes: “and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god.”

Such language was well suited to convince all whose hearts were not altogether blinded, that “they that make a graven image are all of them vanity.”

But this was *excellency of speech and of wisdom*, though it was wisdom taught of God. It was that sort of argument by which the minds of men are wont to be persuaded, and which those desire to use, who seek to gain authority and influence over their fellow creatures.

Paul says, that he came to the Corinthians with no such show of argument or reasoning. He did not discourse to them on the nature of happiness, and prove that they had sought it in many ways, but it was only to be found in obedience to God: he did not enlarge upon the faculties of the soul, or prove that it was not perishable like the body: but he simply *declared the testimony of God*, who “so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son, that all that believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” *I determined to know nothing among you, to profess or boast of no other know-*

ledge, save Jesus Christ : and to speak of him, not as a king clothed with honour and power, and obeyed by his subjects ; not even as a prophet whom all men followed and held in reverence : but of *him crucified*, despised, rejected, “ numbered with the transgressors.”

That he who came to save the world, should have submitted to death at all, must seem a strange thing to the ears of men, who knew nothing of the counsels of God or the prophecies of Scripture. That he should be put to death by those whom he came to deliver, and that having been so put to death, he should still be able and willing to deliver them,—would be more strange still. But that he should have died upon the cross, a death reserved for the basest malefactors, and held too vile even for a Roman citizen to undergo ;—this, indeed, must have seemed foolishness to heathen ears, whether of the philosophers or of the common people : and we can well understand what Paul had in his mind, when he said, *I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

Perhaps, however, though the message which he brought was not such as man is likely to receive, the messenger was one whom they could not turn away from. Language flowed like honey from his lips, and he could either melt the hearers by his tenderness, or speak in words of thunder, and astonish them by his indignation. There was nothing of this kind.

3. *And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.*

4. *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing*

words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5. *That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

More of weakness seems to have encompassed Paul at Corinth than elsewhere. “His bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible;” so at least his enemies could find reason to affirm:—and it was there that the Lord saw fit to encourage him by an unusual assurance; saying to him in a vision, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.”²

Therefore, that “many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized,” was a manifest proof of the authority which supported him. It proceeded from the *demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*³ The Holy Ghost carried assurance to the hearts of those who heard, that the words were not the words of man, but of God.

But though the doctrine which he taught was not man's wisdom, not *the wisdom of this world*; still it was wisdom, and was acknowledged as such by the children of wisdom. Those whose hearts “the Lord opened to understand the things spoken,” and to receive them, knew it to be wisdom.

6. *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:*

7. *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even*

¹ 1 Cor. x. 10.

² Acts xviii. 9, 10.

³ See 1 Thess. i. 5.

⁴ τελειοι οι πιστευοντες.—Chrys.

the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory :

8. *Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

The wisdom of God in a mystery, is what Paul terms elsewhere “the mystery of godliness:⁵ God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” A scheme of mercy planned in God’s counsels from the first, as appears throughout the Old Testament, now that light has been thrown upon the dark hints which it contains. But a *hidden scheme*, not understood by *the princes of this world*: neither by the chief priests and elders, who were the instructors of the people, nor by the magistrates who governed the land: *for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* So Peter charitably addressed his countrymen, “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.”⁶ And the Lord himself had led the way, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”⁷

Even now, the doctrine which Paul preached is the *wisdom of God in a mystery.* The light of the Holy Spirit must be communicated to the heart, before any one rightly understands *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, to be *the Lord of glory.* Those are happy to whom that light is given; and of whom it may be said, as Jesus said to his disciples, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For

⁵ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁶ Acts. iii. 17.

⁷ Luke xxiii. 24.

verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”⁸

LECTURE LI.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED AND RECEIVED THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

1 COR. ii. 9—16.

9. *But as it was written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

10. *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

11. *For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*

The great men of the world, even the learned men, who professed to be teachers, knew not the counsels of God. It has ever been so. Isaiah made the same complaint many hundred years ago; by whom it is written, (lxiv. 4,) “Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”

But what the heart cannot conceive, the counsels

⁸ Matt. xiii. 17.

which are too profound for man's faculties to reach, God may reveal. No one knows what is passing in the thoughts of his friend or his companion, till they are disclosed. *No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him.* The Spirit of God is, in this respect, like the spirit or soul of man; is one with him, and *searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* And the Spirit of God has come, according to the promise; has “guided us into all truth;”¹ has “made known to us the mystery of God's will;”² has opened to us the depth of his counsels. Just as the secrets of a man's heart, though they cannot be discovered, may be freely revealed to his friend.

12. *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

13. *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

There are two methods by which the apostles might communicate the things *given to them of God.* They might dress them up in fine language, and follow the example of philosophers and orators, *speaking in the words which man's wisdom teacheth:* or they might “use all plainness of speech,” commanding themselves to the consciences of men, and depending on the Holy Ghost to convey their words to the heart. This latter method, he says, is ours: *comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* When, for instance, we desire to persuade men that the dead shall

¹ John xvi. 13.

² Eph. i. 9.

rise again; we do not argue on the nature of the soul, that it shall never die: but we show that Christ has risen, and so proved that the dead may rise.³ Further, we prove that Christ should rise again, not by arguing that he was God, and therefore death could not have dominion over him; but by alleging David's prophecy, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither shalt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."⁴ These are *the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*. Again, when we assure the Jews that God will have the Gentiles "to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" we do not argue how all nations of the earth are "of one blood," sprung alike from Adam: but we show how the prophets have said in old times, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people." "There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust."⁵ These are *the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*; and thus we compare *spiritual things with spiritual*, knowing that the faith of Christ must be established, "not by the wisdom of men, but by the power of God."

For, as the things of God do not enter into the heart of man, that he can naturally comprehend them; so likewise there must be a preparation of the heart, that it may receive them.

14. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

The *natural man*, is one in whom no such change

³ Acts xviii. 31. Ch. xv. 12—20.

⁴ Acts ii. 27.

⁵ See Rom. xv. 9—12.

is made as the Spirit makes: that change spoken of by our Lord, where he says, “ Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”⁶ Such an one *receiveth not the things of the Spirit*: his mind is not in a state to admit them: he has not the necessary faculties; for they are spiritual, and he has not the Spirit. Just as one ignorant of a language, cannot receive the things contained in that language. Just as one whose organs of sight are defective, cannot form an idea of colours. Let the eye be cleared from its film; let the key of the language be given; and all will become plain, which before was obscure and unintelligible. And so let the Spirit “take of the things of Christ, and show them to the soul;”⁷ the language is made clear, which before was as a sealed book: the prospect is open, as to one whose sight has been restored.

For example. The coming of the Son of God in the flesh, is as *foolishness to the natural man*: whilst the spiritual man discerns in it the mercy and goodness of God, thus bringing back to himself a lost and rebellious world in the manner best suited to his own nature, and to the nature of mankind. And again, in the death of Christ, “even the death of the cross,” the *natural man* sees nothing but reproach, and weakness, and failure of purpose: whilst the spiritual man discerns in it the extent and guilt of sin which required so vast a sacrifice, and for which so vast a sacrifice was made.

And these things he sees, which others fail to see, because they are spiritually discerned, and he is spi-

⁶ John iii. 5.

⁷ John xvi. 13—15.

ritual : he possesses the sense by which they are conveyed to the mind ; he has learnt the language in which they are disclosed.

15. *But he that is spiritual judgeth* (or discerneth) *all things, yet he himself is judged* (or discerned)⁸ *of no man.*

16. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?*⁹ *But we have the mind of Christ.*

No one could instruct the spiritual man, unless he were acquainted with the divine counsels, *the mind of the Lord.* The apostle *had* that mind, *the mind of Christ,* revealed to him, and therefore was capable of teaching *all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

What St. Paul states in this chapter, agrees with all experience. When *the things of God* are declared, *he that is spiritual judgeth* or discerns them : whilst to others they are *foolishness.* “Some believe the things which are spoken, and some believe not.”¹ When they are received, it is because “the Lord opens the heart.”² No man cometh unto Christ, unless he be “drawn of the Father.”³ As many as “receive him, and believe in his name, are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”⁴

But whilst we have this assurance, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of God* : we have also the gracious words, “If ye, being evil, know how to give

⁸ As in the margin of our translation. No man can judge of him, because they are ignorant of the principles by which he is governed.

⁹ Instruct the spiritual man.

¹ Acts xxviii. 24.

² Acts xvi. 14.

³ John vi. 44.

⁴ John i. 12, 13.

good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him !”⁵

LECTURE LII.

SUCCESS IN THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY DEPENDENT ON THE GRACE OF GOD.

1 COR. iii. 1—9.

1. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

2. *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.*

3. *For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

4. *For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*

These Corinthians ought to have been *spiritually minded*: renewed and changed by the Spirit of God. It is the character of Christians generally, that they “are not in the flesh, but in the spirit:” that “the Spirit of God dwelleth in them.”¹ The promise is given to them that believe: “Repent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”² But of

⁵ Luke xi. 13.

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

² Acts ii. 38.

this there must be proof; and they are not approved as having the Spirit, unless they “walk after the Spirit:” and show by their life and conversation that “old things have passed away” with them; that “all things are become new.”³

Paul therefore complains that he had no such proof in this community: rather he had proof of the contrary. He *could not speak unto them as spiritual*, but still *as carnal*: still under the influence of that sinful nature which ought to have been renewed. At best, they were but *as babes in Christ*, infants in the christian character: and as an infant cannot digest the food which nourishes the grown man, so these were unable to receive the truths which are understood by the advanced Christian.

Their *envying*, their *strife*, their *divisions*, were signs of this: they *walked as men*: as natural men, unregenerate men. For these parties of theirs must have their origin in some of the evil affections of our corrupt nature. *I am of Paul, one saith*: of him who first brought the knowledge of Christ to Corinth: of him who learned from the Lord Jesus himself the truths which he declared to us, and to whom it was permitted to enjoy a visible representation of the divine glory.⁴

I am of Cephas, would another say: who was never “a blasphemer, or a persecutor, or injurious”⁵ to the church: to whom the Lord gave his special charge, that he should “feed his lambs, his sheep:”⁶ who spoke on the day of Pentecost the first discourse which was ever uttered in the name of Christ,

³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

⁴ Acts ix. 3—5, 27. Gal. i. 12.

⁵ 1 Tim. i. 13.

⁶ John xxi. 15—17.

and which was so blessed of God, that after it three thousand persons declared their belief, and were baptized.⁷

And we are *of Apollos*, would be the boast of others. Who so “mighty in the scripture?”⁸ Who so eloquent, so able to win men’s hearts, in showing them the loving-kindness of the Lord? Who so full of knowledge, expounding from Moses and all the prophets the things relating to Jesus Christ?⁹

This is to *be carnal*: to act as ordinary men. For it is thus that men of the world set up one leader or one teacher against another, and magnify their party, because in so doing they magnify themselves. Trace this to its source, and you will find it either spring from pride, each man esteeming himself better than others: or from covetousness: because what might be his is obtained by another.

From thoughts like these, which are of the earth, earthly, St. Paul would turn to those which are of heaven, heavenly: to the great object of their faith, and not to the man who taught them to believe.

5. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?*

6. *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*

7. *So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase.*

8. *Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.*

⁷ Acts ii. 14—41.

⁸ Acts xviii. 24—28.

⁹ Luke xxiv. 27.

9. *For we are labourers together with God : ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

Whilst Paul abode at Corinth, and taught in the house of Justus, he planted the tree of life ; the tree whose “leaves are for the healing of the nations,” and whose fruit is the health of the soul for ever. After a while Apollos came,¹ and found this tree growing, but in want of cultivation : care must be taken, lest it be choked by the cares of the world, and the lusts of other things :² lest when temptations arise, it decay and wither. Apollos bestowed this care : *Apollos watered.* But how often does such labour fail ! How often is that experienced in spiritual husbandry, which the prophet speaks of in natural husbandry ; “Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little : and I did blow upon it, saith the Lord of hosts.”³

If, therefore, any were led to walk worthy of their calling : if any, when affliction or persecution arose, did not fall away : it was the Lord’s doing ; it was *God who gave the increase.* Man can address the heart, but God alone can open the heart, that it may receive the word ; or strengthen it, that it may “continue in the word.”

What therefore are Paul, or Apollos, or what is any labourer in the vineyard, but instruments to prepare the work which God alone can bless or bring to perfection ? *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one ;* each labours in the same cause, and shall receive his own reward. They sow the seed, where the sun may cause it to spring up, or the rain may cherish

¹ Acts xix. 1.

² Mark iv. 19.

³ Haggai i. 9.

it: but it is God that sendeth the rain, and maketh the sun to shine. If it please Him that any seed take root, and bring forth fruit,—twenty, thirty, or sixty fold,—to God be the glory. *Ye are God's husbandry*: we who plant and water *are labourers together with Him*: but there is this difference; our labour can do nothing without Him: He can do everything without our labour.

In these few words, *Ye are God's husbandry*, what comfort to the humble Christian! He does not depend upon the teacher, who may be soon removed by the varying circumstances of life: still less does he depend upon himself, weak and wavering as he knows his heart to be: God, who “is greater than the heart,” has taken him under his care, and is so ordering the ground on which he stands, so tempering the seasons to which he is exposed, that “all things shall work together for his good,”⁴ and further his salvation. Only let him judge concerning the soul and its value, as God judges of it: and not neglect the plant which God vouchsafes to tend.

⁴ Rom. viii. 28.

LECTURE LIII.

THE DANGER OF FALSE TEACHING, AND OF PERVERTING TRUTH BY ERROR.

1 COR. iii. 10—15.

10. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

11. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

A heart established in the faith of Christ, is compared to a house built on a firm foundation. And when a heart is so established, it is the work of the Holy Spirit, without which nothing could stand. Paul's last words were, *Ye are God's building.* God, however, uses as instruments his apostles, his ministers. Paul, therefore, calls himself *a master builder*; and a *wise builder*, because he laid his foundation safely, and built the house upon a rock. He had come, for example, to the city of Corinth; and had there made known, both to Jews and Gentiles, the plain and simple truth, that God had sent his Son into the world, to the end "that all who believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Just as if an architect should select a spot where a building was to be raised: should lay the foundation: design the whole plan: and then be called elsewhere,

leaving his work to be completed by others. Paul alludes to such others, the teachers who succeeded him, when he says, *Let every man take heed how he buildeth upon the foundation which I have laid.* The foundation itself he cannot alter. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* But keeping this foundation, he might raise very different work upon it: he might build upon it what is frail and perishing, or he might build what is lasting and secure. And it is by the strength or weakness of the building that the skill of the architect is proved.

12. *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

13. *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

One of the teachers who succeeded Paul at Corinth was Apollos. And he, “when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace. (Acts xviii. 27.) For he mighty convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.” This was to *build upon the foundation* laid by Paul, *gold, silver, precious stones:* i. e. it was teaching doctrines, which, like these valuable substances, would abide the trial: the trial like that of fire, by which in the great “day of the Lord” every man’s work would be declared. If gold is cast into the furnace, it comes out gold. If a conflagration reaches the building which is adorned with gold, or silver, or precious stones, they will not be utterly consumed. Fire proves what is worthless, and what

is precious; and so *the day of judgment* shall reveal the real character of the workman, by revealing the nature and value of his work: *shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.* For as the doctrine is, such will be the character which is formed upon the doctrine. “Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles:”¹ neither do those who teach doctrines contrary to Scripture, or who mix error with their truth, make such disciples as walk worthy of their high calling, or adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

Those, for instance, who came down from Judea to Antioch, (Acts xv. 1,) and “taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” These *built wood, hay, stubble*; brought materials, which had no strength in them, to the foundation laid by the former teachers at Antioch, who had spoken “unto the Grecians there, preaching the Lord Jesus.”² The law of Moses was now set aside; was “old, and ready to vanish away:”³ and to place that on the foundation of the Gospel, was like raising stories of *wood*, or a roof thatched with *straw* or *hay*,—mere slight and temporary materials,—upon a basis of solid and well-hewn stone. If a fire were to prevail through such a building, the *wood, hay, stubble*, would perish out of sight: and if such doctrines were to be tried by the test of Scripture, or if disciples who had been taught such doctrines were exposed to temptation, their worthlessness must be proved. And every man's work shall be made manifest. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the

¹ See Matt. vii. 16.

² Acts xi. 19.

³ Heb. viii. 13.

things done in his body, according to that he hath done.”⁴

14. *If any man's work abide which he hath built there-upon, he shall receive a reward.*

15. *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

The season of temptation is the season of trial. Paul rejoices over his Thessalonian disciples, “for their patience and faith in all the tribulations and persecutions that they endured.”⁵ The work which he had built there, stood the trial. They did not “receive the word with joy, and anon in time of temptation fall away:” but having “heard the word in an honest and good heart, they kept it, and brought forth fruit with patience.”⁶ But the greatest trial, is the last trial, the day of judgment; when it will be clearly made manifest of what sort the work has been; and when those teachers will *receive a reward*, a “crown of rejoicing,”⁷ whose *work abides* the all-searching eye of God; and is “found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”⁸

Whereas, *if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss*: his rejoicing shall be clouded, the brightness of his crown impaired; though having remained on the true foundation, *he himself shall be saved*:—*yet so as by fire*: rather as “a brand plucked out of the burning,”⁹ than as one “whom the Lord delighteth to honour.”

Suppose a man to have taught, for instance, that since Christ has fulfilled the law, his people are no

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 10.

⁵ 2 Thess. i. 4.

⁶ See Luke viii. 13, 14.

⁷ 1 Thess. ii. 19.

⁸ 1 Pet. i. 7.

⁹ Zech. iii. 2.

longer under the law as a rule or standard of practice:—such a *man's work shall not abide*: for he alone, “who doeth righteousness, is righteous”:¹ and “not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”²

Or suppose a man to teach, that as Jesus said to the sick persons whom he healed, “Thy sins be forgiven thee;”³ so he speaks as clearly now to the conscience of every one whom he receives; and that they have not true faith, who have not full knowledge and assurance that their sins are pardoned. This *work* would not *abide*. Such a teacher would have been adding a roof of straw to a foundation of stone. He would have held, indeed, the foundation, and built upon the rock of Christ; but the building would be frail and perishable.

Still we would not say, in cases such as these, what the apostle said of wilful perverters of the truth; “their condemnation is just.”⁴ We would not say that God might not accept such workmen; even if *their work were burned*: for though they prophesied falsely, they were not intentional deceivers, but deceived themselves through human infirmity. They might still *be saved*, though *so as by fire*. He who knoweth our frame, “knoweth that we are but dust,” may see fit to accept willing services, whilst he pardons the errors of weakness. Still, to be so saved from everlasting destruction, as a man is saved from a fire raging around him,—gives fearful proof of the danger which those incur who add to the truths of the Gospel what God has not added, or build upon

¹ 1 John iii. 7.

² Rom. ii. 13.

³ Matt. ix. 2; Luke vii. 47.

⁴ Rom. iii. 8.

the basis of redemption through Christ Jesus what is no better than *wood, or hay, or stubble*. It shows the need of the apostle's warning, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."⁵

LECTURE LIV.

THE CHRISTIAN IS MADE THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

1 COR. iii. 16, 17.

16. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

As much as to say, I have spoken of building, of an architect, of a foundation: and not without meaning. *Ye are the temple of God.* Ye, the Christians of Corinth, are raised up to the glory of God; just in the same manner as the many temples which adorn your city, are intended to honour the gods, (which are no gods,) to whom they are dedicated. St. Paul uses the example frequently in writing to the Corinthians,¹ because their city was famous for the grandeur and richness of its temples. And it is a striking example. The whole christian body dispersed throughout the world, constitutes one magnificent temple built of God to his own honour. Every community of christian wor-

⁵ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

¹ See vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16.

shippers, such as those who were united in the faith at Corinth, or Philippi, or Ephesus, is also a temple of the living God; “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone: in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”²

And not only so; but the same may be affirmed of every individual Christian; as Paul does say, both here, and afterwards in his sixth chapter: “Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” For as the members of Christ’s church in the world at large form one vast building, in which God may be glorified; so each single Christian is a separate temple or shrine, raised for the same purpose, and called to a share of the like glory.

The example is very accurate. There is a close resemblance in the manner in which the temple built of stone, and the living temple which Christians form, are chosen and set apart to the service of God.

The first temple of which we read in sacred history, is that which David planned, and Solomon afterwards completed with extraordinary magnificence at Jerusalem. It was built upon a spot which Araunah the Jebusite had used as a threshing floor.³ At that spot the pestilence ceased which was raging through the land. And God commanded David to rear an altar there, in token of the mercy which he had shown in staying the hand of the destroying angel.

² Ephes. ii. 20.

³ See 2 Sam. xxiv. 18, &c.

From that time the spot was made sacred, which before had been occupied for a common though useful purpose. Before, its business had been of this world, ministering to men that bread, which whoever eateth, shall hunger again.⁴ It afterwards became holy ground, and was to supply the food which nourishes the soul for ever.

The case was very similar, when, in obedience to the will of God, the Gospel was preached to these Corinthians. The command was given to David, “Go and rear an altar to the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah.” And so the word was given to the apostles: “Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”⁵ They who received the word, were taken from a state, in which they were bringing no honour to God: nay, worse, were dishonouring and denying him, worshipping instead the work of their own hands, the image of men like themselves, and following not his will, but the devices and desires of their own hearts. So that it was not with them, as with the threshing floor where the temple of Jerusalem was built; which though not a sacred place, had been used innocently; these, before they were called to be believers, had been actually profane: before they entered into the house of God, they had been engaged in the work and doing the will of Satan. From this state they were taken, that they might serve God: acknowledge his right to rule over them: and live no longer unto themselves, but unto Him who had called them to “glorify him in their body and their spirit, which are

⁴ See John vi. 36, &c.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 19.

his.”⁶ So that as we should describe a christian church, as a holy place, a peculiar building: so St. Peter says of christian men; “ Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people;⁷ that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

Thus it proved, for instance, at Ephesus. The people to whom the Gospel was preached there, had been living in a way which more especially dishonours God: for they had pretended to power which only he can have, and to knowledge which belongs to him alone.⁸ But at the preaching of Paul, “ power fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified: and many that believed, came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

Nay, we need not go beyond these very Corinthians for an example. In their former ignorance they had done those things which cannot be done by men who are holy to the Lord. St. Paul says of them,—after describing the practices which are abominable in the sight of God,—“ Such were some of you. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”⁹

Thus it is when a man like Zaccheus,¹ or a

⁶ Ch. vi. 20.

⁷ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

⁸ Acts xix. 17—19.

⁹ Ch. vi. 9—11.

¹ Luke xix. 7—9.

body of men like the Ephesians or Corinthians, are taken from things common and worldly, or still more from things profane and wicked, and consecrated to God as believers in Christ Jesus. It is with them as with the spot on which a church is raised. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." What was common, is made sacred. What was this world's property, now belongs to God. What did belong to earth, is now concerned with heaven.

But the dignity to which man is thus raised, like all dignity, has duties connected with it. That which is set apart to the glory of God, must not disgrace his name. So that the apostle reminds the Corinthians:

17. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

False teachers *defile the temple of God*. Their errors, to which he had been before alluding, tend to make those who are misled by them unworthy of their high calling. Let all beware therefore, and take heed to the doctrine which they built upon the foundation of christian faith, lest it should be said of them, in the language of the Psalmist, "Thy holy temple they have profaned."²

And so likewise any wickedness *defiles the temple of God*; defiles the soul, which ought to be preserved pure and without spot, like God's own sanctuary. And if a person admitted into his bosom a

² Ps. lxxiv. 7.

wilful sin, and allowed it to keep possession there, he was like one who, without proper purification, dared to worship in the temple, or to take that which is holy, and cast it to dogs or swine.

Let them be warned, therefore, and remember, that *the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* The temple in which God is worshipped, is consecrated for the express purpose, that ever afterwards it may be separated from places profane or worldly. They were in like circumstances. They had been dedicated to God, and made his children “through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus.” If they *defiled the temple of God,* they could only expect to be shut out “from his presence and the glory of his power.” The “house of prayer” must remain holy, as befits a house of prayer, and not be turned into “a den of thieves.”³

LECTURE LV.

1 COR. iii. 18—23.

GOD AND NOT MAN THE OBJECT OF DIGNITY AND PRAISE.

18. *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*

19. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*

³ Matt. xxi. 13.

20. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

There is a wisdom of this world, and a wisdom which is not of this world, but of God. The wisdom of this world begins and ends with this world; has that alone for its object. The wisdom which is of God proceeds from above, and looks to things above. It was the wisdom of this world which the wife of Zebedee manifested, when she went to the Lord Jesus with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. (Matt. xx. 20.) And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. The wisdom which is from above is that which Jesus in his answer required of his disciples, “ Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

It is this state of mind which Paul recommends when he says, *If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise.* If anyman among you takes to himself the name or the appearance of wisdom, looks to himself and his own credit, and not to the cause in which he is engaged: *let him become a fool, that he may be wise:* let him lay aside all such arrogance and self-seeking, so that the men of this generation shall even call him simple, and ignorant of his own interests, *that he may be wise* in the sight of God: “ wise unto salvation,” because he seeks that first which alone is truly valuable. It was in the like spirit that our Lord

said, “ Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”¹ He must lay aside the wisdom of man, that he may learn the wisdom of God. It has been taught us from the beginning. For Job has written, *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*² And David hath written, *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*³

The Corinthians therefore must learn not to judge of a man by his boastings or pretensions, but rather by his simplicity. To prefer others to ourselves in honour,⁴ in the sight of men is foolishness; but in the sight of God is true wisdom. For how can they be seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, who seek honour one of another, and not the honour which cometh from God only?⁵

21. *Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;*

22. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;*

23. *And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

To honour the teacher who shows the way of salvation, is a sign that we set a value on salvation. The apostle elsewhere prescribes that such “be esteemed very highly in love for their works' sake;”⁶ that they be “counted worthy of double honour,” “who labour in the word and doctrine.”⁷ But such is our nature, that where there is good, evil is always

¹ Mark x. 5.

² Job v. 13.

³ Ps. xciv. 11.

* Rom. xii. 10.

⁵ John v. 44.

⁶ 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

⁷ 1 Tim. v. 17.

lying close at hand. Reverence for one, may end in contempt of others. Esteem leads to rivalry, envy, jealousy. And this was the present danger of the church at Corinth. Therefore Paul writes, *Let no man glory in men*: setting up Paul, or setting up Cephas, or setting up Apollos, as if they were the fountains of the truth to be believed or the faith to be maintained, and not the mere channels through which the word of God was conveyed. The source of their faith, the real origin of their salvation, was the love of God, who had designed to bring them to the faith in which they were standing, and therefore had given them the means that are needful to produce and support it. *For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos;* whatever teacher proclaims to you the word of God, or is set over you to rule and to admonish, these were ordained teachers for your sakes: and if they or any other minister of the word should fail, the same love of God which raised up these, would raise up others in their stead, that ye might not perish for lack of knowledge.

Nay, more than this; even things which seem most out of human reach, *all are yours—the world*, that portion of it which is expedient for you; *life*, that extent of it which is most desirable; *or death*, that manner, that season of it which God sees fittest: all these are ordered for you, *things present and things to come, all are yours*: all shall be made to contribute to the same merciful purpose of God towards you.

Thus he leads their thoughts from man to God: that they may think less of the instrument, and more

of the first cause of their privileges. These things are yours: and they are yours, because *ye are Christ's*: ye have devoted yourselves to him, and he “purchased you with his own blood;”⁸ purchased all which is to ensure the destiny he intends for you. And these blessings cannot be taken from you, or you deprived of them: because, as *ye are Christ's*, so *Christ is God's*: the will and the power of Christ is in fact the will and the power of God: and who can prevent what he designs, or counteract what he ordains? It is the Lord's own assurance, (John x. 27,) “I give unto them who hear my voice and follow me, eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.”

Therefore, “whoso glorieth, let him glory in the Lord:” and learn to think of men as no more than his ministers for his people's good. They are to be valued “for the Lord's sake:” but not in the Lord's stead. He is the real “author and finisher of our faith:”⁹ if “he hideth his face, we are troubled,”¹ and vain is the help of man. “He is our life:”² if he takes away our spiritual breath, we die, and return to our dust.

⁸ Acts xx. 28.

¹ See Ps. civ. 29.

⁹ Heb. xii. 2.

² Col. iii. 3.

LECTURE LVI.

A FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP REFERRED TO THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

1 COR. iv. 1—5.

1. Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

The apostle had been showing how he and other teachers of the gospel ought not to be accounted of. It must never be forgotten that of themselves they were nothing, and could do nothing. They were “labourers together with God.” They were but instruments to perform his purposes ; ministers, through whose teaching the people might repent and believe the gospel.

He now expresses this by another term. Let us be looked upon, he says, *as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* Stewards. As “the eldest servant of Abraham’s house, ruled over all he had :”¹ as Potiphar, in Egypt, made “Joseph overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand :”² so God had entrusted the apostles with the mysteries of his counsels, things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, that they might be dispensed for the benefit of mankind.

¹ Gen. xxiv. 2.

² Gen. xxxix. 4.

For they were *mysteries*. The present state of man is a mystery. The apostles explained it. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”³ The future destiny of man is a mystery. The apostles disclosed it. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”⁴ The way of man’s salvation is a mystery. It was revealed to the apostles, “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”⁵ “For as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” Of these eternal and all important mysteries, the apostles were *stewards, as ministers of Christ*, the author of the salvation which they proclaimed. And thus they were to be *accounted of*, not as if the blessing was theirs to give, but as being the instruments through which it was given: dispensing what was not their own, but what God in his mercy had committed to them, for the good of the household of faith.

And this leads the apostle to speak of his responsibility. He cannot think of the importance of his office, without thinking of the account which must be rendered.

2. *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

3. *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be*

³ Rom. v. 12. ⁴ 2 Cor. v. 10. ⁵ Rom. viii. 1; v. 18.

judged of you, or of man's judgment : yea, I judge not mine own self.

4. *For I know nothing by myself : yet am I not hereby justified : but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

It is required of a steward that he dispense to each his portion in due season : that he deny to none what God has revealed for all : that he give not to one what is intended for another : but deal to every man according as his state shall be. If Paul, when brought before Felix, had not reasoned with him “of righteousness, and temperance and judgment to come ;”⁶ he would not have been a *faithful steward* : he might have led Felix to suppose that there was no future judgment, or that a man might stand in the judgment without righteousness and temperance. If when asked by the goaler at Philippi, “What must I do to be saved ?”⁷ he had merely replied, “Do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God :”⁸ he would not have been a *faithful steward* : he would have delivered but a portion of the truth committed to his charge. But when reviewing his ministry at Miletus, he was able to say, “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”⁹ And thus he was a faithful steward.

Yet was he *not hereby justified*. Though he *knew nothing by himself* ;¹ i. e., though his conscience acquitted him ; yet conscience partakes of human

⁶ Acts xxiv. 25.

⁷ Acts xvi. 30.

⁸ Micah vi. 8.

⁹ Acts xx. 26.

¹ i. e. Against himself: Οὐδέν συνοίδα ἔμαυτω.

frailty, and he might deceive himself. There was one master, to whom he must stand or fall. *He that judgeth me, is the Lord.*

This is spoken under a strong but just sense of the infirmity of the heart. “Who can tell how oft he offendeth?” “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”² “If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”³ Paul would remember the time, when he “verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁴ The light that was in him, the principle he then acted on, was darkness. He allowed himself in that which was his condemnation; and therefore he says here, *With me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.* How many, we may believe, have fatally deceived themselves and others, when whilst professing to be “doing God service,”⁵ they have in fact been following the impulse of their own feelings, the desire of their own hearts! How many *ministers of Christ* have dispensed the word unfaithfully, their conscience meanwhile excusing and not accusing them! They have bound those whom they ought to have loosed, or loosed those whom God did not authorise them to absolve: they have made hearts sad, which God did not make sad;⁶ they have allowed others to depart in peace, whom they ought to have warned of danger; because “a deceived heart has turned them aside,”⁷ and made them unfaithful *stewards of the mysteries of God.*

² Rom. xiv. 22.

³ Matt. vi. 23.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 9.

⁵ John xvi. 2. See Luke ix. 15.

⁶ Ezek. xiii. 22.

⁷ Isa. xliv. 20.

With a strong sense of this evil upon his mind, St. Paul concludes,

5. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.

In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul speaks of some who “preached Christ out of envy and strife.”⁸ These might have the praise of men: were very likely to possess it, because preaching out of strife, they would have a party on their side. Those who took the part of Korah against Moses, called his company “the people of the Lord.”⁹ Paul also speaks of others who might have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and yet “have not charity.”¹ These too would have the praise of men; for men would be instructed by their knowledge, and gratified by their talents, and might not be aware of the evil which was lurking in the heart. We are not to suspect what is unseen. But our imperfect acquaintance with *the counsels of the heart* may make us moderate and cautious in our judgments, and slow to set up one at the expense of another. The enemies of Paul at Corinth, cast reproach upon him, and exalted other teachers in his stead. He warns them that man’s judgment may be very erroneous; God may see much to approve, when they saw something to condemn. God may see much to condemn in what men are too ready to applaud. *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will make manifest the counsels of*

⁸ Phil. i. 15.

⁹ Numb. xvi. 41.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.

the heart : and then shall every man have praise of God. “ Every man shall receive according as his work shall be.” And they will often receive most, who have been least applauded amongst men : whose meekness has been mistaken, whose merit has been obscured by that humility which is in the sight of God of great price. Then it will be seen who has most sincerely endeavoured, without envy or strife, without self-seeking or private interests, to promote the cause of the Gospel, and the salvation of mankind.

LECTURE LVII.

THE CORINTHIANS WARNED AGAINST PRIDE AND SELF-COMPLACENCY.

1 COR. iv. 6—13.

6. And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes ; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

With that charity which avoids giving needless pain, Paul had withheld the names of those at Corinth, who formed parties, and claimed distinction. He used, instead, his own name and that of Apollos, when he asked, (ii. 5,) “ Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed ?” If even they are to be thought no more of, than as

instruments in the hand of God, as mere husbandmen, tillers of the ground, who could not secure an increase to their labour: still more unreasonable would it be to *think of other men above that which had been written* and prescribed as the line which they ought to observe: *to be puffed up for one against another*, as if they were lords instead of stewards: authors of the gift, instead of the channels through which it flowed.

For he might ask of one of these self-exalted teachers, as in truth he might ask of any individual member of the church,

7. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

Whatever they possessed or boasted of, it could only have been received from God; so that not unto them, not unto themselves, but unto God must be all the praise. Had they wisdom? It is God “who giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.”¹ Had they eloquence? That will fail like seed cast by the wayside, unless the Lord open the heart that it attend unto the words spoken.² Had they success? This too is from the Lord: he “gives the increase:” it is with the spiritual as with the natural husbandry, “I, saith the Lord, I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.”³

¹ Dan. ii. 21.

² Acts xvi. 14.

³ Amos iv. 7.

This is forgotten, when the people glory in their teacher, or the teachers in their people. The tendency of such boasting, such *puffing up of one against another*, is to keep out of sight “the lord of the harvest,” on whom alone it must depend, whether the most skilful teaching, or the most zealous labours, bring the expected return. Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas came back to Antioch, after a visit to the principal districts of Asia, and gathered the church together that they might report the progress they had made,⁴ they “rehearsed” (we are told) “all that God had done with them.” They did not relate what they had done for God, but what God had done with them: how he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. It could not be alleged against these, as against the boasters at Corinth, *Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* as if by thine own power or holiness thou hadst caused this man to cease from evil, or that man to learn to do well ?

But they were proud and self-satisfied.

8. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.*

They had exalted themselves, and held the apostle in contempt. They had boasted of themselves that they were *rich*, and had need of nothing: that they were *full*, had all things, and abounded; they wanted no counsel: they assumed power and honour: they *reigned as kings*. And *would to God ye did reign*, says the apostle seriously: would to God that ye

⁴ Acts xiv. 27.

were really deserving of such honour: we would be “partakers of your joy:” we would *reign with you*, and ye should be “our glory and crown of rejoicing.” Nothing could be more gratifying to us, than to see you possessed of true riches, real abundance, and that honour which cometh from God: the sight of it would raise and exalt us: because ye were honoured, we should be honoured also. And, truly, we have much need of some such comfort. Very different are our circumstances now. Our reign is not yet come. At present our honour is reproach; our riches, poverty; and our throne, a prison.

9. *For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.*

10. *We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.*

11. *Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;*

12. *And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:*

13. *Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.*

This was the condition of the apostles. They were treated as the *last*, the lowest or vilest, of men: as *appointed unto death*: deserving nothing else: as when the multitude at Jerusalem lifted up their voices against Paul,⁵ and said, “Away with such a fellow from the face of the earth: for it is not fit

⁵ Acts xxi. 22.

that he should live." It could not be otherwise, condemning as they did the evil ways which men had been used to practise, and considered innocent: or exposing the vanities in which they had been bred up, and which they held in esteem. "Turning the world upside down," they could not but be *buffeted*, and *reviled*, and *persecuted*, by those who had their interest in the world. Such as Demetrius at Ephesus,⁶ who stirred up "the workmen of like occupation," warning them of the danger which threatened their craft, if Paul should "persuade and turn away the people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands." Or such as those at Philippi,⁷ who "when they saw that the hope of their gain was gone" through Paul's means, "caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place, unto the rulers: when the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them."

This is our state, says Paul to these Corinthians; very different from that which ye seem to court or admire. And thus he delicately reminds them that they were in great danger, if they looked for temporal privileges or man's applause: or regarded present comforts as the thing chiefly to be desired. Not, however, that he repined, or murmured: he was enabled, "in whatever state he was, therein to be content;" nay, to "joy in tribulations also;" knowing how the Lord had said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, or persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your

⁶ Acts xix. 24—27.

⁷ Acts xvi. 19—22.

reward in heaven.”⁸ Looking to this assurance, he was able, when *defamed*, to *entreat*; when *reviled*, to *bless*; when *persecuted*, to *suffer it*; knowing that his “light affliction, which was but for a moment, should work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”⁹

LECTURE LVIII.

THE CORINTHIANS REMINDED OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO PAUL, AND OF HIS AUTHORITY.

1 COR. iv. 14—21.

14. *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.*

15. *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel.*

16. *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*

17. *For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.*

Elsewhere, as well as here, Paul speaks of Timothy as “his own son in the faith:”¹ and of Onesimus, “whom he had begotten in his bonds:”² i. e. whom he had converted whilst a prisoner at Rome. In the same spirit he reminds the Corinthians, who were

⁸ Matt. v. 11.

⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

¹ 1 Tim. i. 2.

² Philemon 10.

treating him with no filial love or reverence, that through him they had received their spiritual life: and could never owe to any other instructor what they owed to him: *for in Christ Jesus he had begotten them through the gospel.*

And yet we are told, that they who receive Jesus as the Christ, “are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”³ This is an undoubted truth. “Paul plants, and Apollos waters: but it is God who giveth the increase.”⁴ The spiritual children, as well as the children of the flesh, “are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord.”⁵ Whether we speak of the natural or the spiritual being, God alone supplies “the breath of life.” Paul was no more than the minister, through whom they had believed. But then he *was* that minister: God had rendered him the instrument of new life to them; the channel of a blessing for which it was impossible to make an adequate return. Had there been in the children the spirit which animated the father, they could never have cast reproach upon one to whom they owed so much: even their own selves.⁶ For how affectionately he speaks, grieving over the rebuke which it was his duty to convey! *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.*

It was a part of the same paternal tenderness, that he *sends Timotheus*, to regulate what was disorderly, and *bring to their remembrance* the rules which he had prescribed. He delayed his own

³ John i. 13.

⁴ Ch. iii. 6.

⁵ Ps. cxxvii. 3.

⁶ Philemon 19.

coming, that it might be a joyful coming. And of this, too, the enemy made advantage.

18. *Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.*

19. *But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.*

20. *For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.*

In no respect is the kingdom of God *in word* alone. It was not by word, but by “demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” that the kingdom of God was set up throughout the world. God wrought with the apostles by wonders and signs and mighty deeds, and so proved that he was with them of a truth. It would not have been enough that they should go into all nations, preaching the Gospel to every creature, if they had shown no signs of *power*, confirming their words.

And again, it is not *in word* alone that any man can have an interest in the kingdom of God. Unless it has been brought *in power* to his heart, so as to “overcome the world and the things that are in the world,” so as to take his affections from things below, and fix them on things above, he has not the kingdom of God within him. We know the words of Christ: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”⁷

This, however, is not the principal meaning of St. Paul here. He intends to put his Corinthian rivals

⁷ Matt. vii. 21.

to the proof, whether they have the authority of God, or not, to justify their opposing him. The magicians at the court of Pharaoh were great *in word*, and imitated for a while the wonders wrought by Moses. But at length their *power* failed: and they were forced to confess before Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.”⁸ The prophets of Baal were great *in word*: but Elijah put them to the proof; challenged them to meet him in sacrifice, and said, “Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”⁹ He was shown to be great *in power*; when the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice which he had prepared; so that conviction overcame the rebellious people, and they exclaimed, “The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.” So Paul says here concerning his enemies at Corinth, *I will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.* It shall be seen, whether God is with them, as he is with me, whom he sent to be his apostle unto the Gentiles. If we had *word* only to produce in proof of our commission, we might “speak with the tongues of men and angels,” yet might not be effectual to pull down the strong-holds of Satan. But it has pleased God that his kingdom should “come with power:” he has wrought by our hands “miracles and wonders among the Gentiles;”¹ and thus it shall be seen, whether *they who are puffed up as though I would not come to you*, have the authority to which they pretend, or no.

⁸ Exod. viii. 7, 18, 19.

⁹ 1 Kings xviii. 24—39.

¹ Acts xv. 12; xix. 11.

Still he had rather visit them as a tender father, anxious to assist and encourage his children, than as one who must exercise his authority, and correct their misdoings.

21. *What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?*

Paul would bring them to repentance, if possible, by love, and not through fear. He would prove his apostleship by meekness and gentleness, and not by the exercise of the superhuman power with which he was entrusted. And we do not wonder at these his sentiments. They were part of the renewed mind: an example of what he prescribes to others. “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be patient, gentle unto all men.”² They were, too, the sentiments of a man conscious of his own infirmities, and therefore ready to make allowance for the infirmities of others. Still more, he was thus imitating that unspeakable mercy, which God himself shows to his rebellious creatures: whose words are, “Turn you at my reproof:” “Turn yourselves, and live ye. For why will ye die, O house of Israel!”³ It is not for man to cherish wrath or indignation, when “the Lord is thus merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. Like as a father pitith his children; so the Lord pitith them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are but dust.”⁴

² 2 Tim. ii. 24.

³ Prov. i. 23; Ezek. xviii. 31, 32.

⁴ Ps. ciii. 8, 14.

LECTURE LIX.

THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF A MEMBER OF
THE CHURCH AT CORINTH.

1 COR. V. 1—5.

1. *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.*

2. *And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*

It had been brought to St. Paul's knowledge, that one of the members of the church at Corinth was living in the shameful manner he describes; and was allowed, notwithstanding, to continue a member of the church. Is this, he asks, a church which can be boastful, and proud of its state and character? Pride would be unbecoming a company of christian men in any case: for if they have more, or do more, than others, what have they which they have not received?¹ But for men to be haughty and *puffed up*, among whom a sin of this kind exists, is unreasonable beyond all common measure. There ought rather to be a general mourning and humiliation: there ought to be no rest till *he that hath done this deed be taken away from among those whom he corrupts and disgraces.*

¹ Ch. iv. 7.

Therefore, as the apostle of Christ, as having authority to command, and power to enforce his authority, he gives them his solemn injunction how to act. Though *absent in body*, he would *be present* with them *in spirit*: his spirit would be as it were amongst them when they cleared themselves from this impure contagion.

3. *For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,*

4. *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

5. *To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

Our Lord had said, (Matt. xviii. 18,) “If two of you shall agree on earth touching any thing that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Here was a proper occasion to claim this promise. Here was a great scandal: a direct transgression of the law. What would the surrounding heathen judge concerning a society which professed a purity of morals unheard of among the Gentiles, yet permitted a practice to exist which even the Gentiles would abhor?

An example must be made, and this wicked person cut off from the church in which he had no lot or portion. Paul had judged, therefore, according to the authority committed to him, *concerning him who*

hath so done this deed: he had judged, that solemnly, and collected in a body, *in the name and with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ*, they should *deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh*. They should separate him from that church over which Satan cannot prevail or rule, as one who was no longer entitled to the protection it enjoys.

The church consists of those who are in covenant with Christ Jesus, having received him, and believing in his name. Those who are within that covenant, are taken out of Satan's power. He is "the strong man armed, who keepeth his palace and his goods, till a stronger than he come upon him, and overcome him, and divide the spoils."² Thus the people of God, the disciples of Christ, are rescued from the power of Satan. But when the captive thus rescued offends against the laws of his deliverer, he withdraws himself from his guardianship: the deliverer no longer exerts his power to preserve, and the transgressor falls back into the hands of "the strong man armed." *The destruction of the flesh* may ensue. Satan had power against Job, to the destruction of the flesh.³ The Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, he is in thine hand. But save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." This was permitted in the case of Job, to prove his patience. A like infliction might be designed in the case of this offender, to bring him to repentance. Deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, *that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*.

² See Luke xi. 21.

³ Job ii. 6, 7.

There was, indeed, no security for such a result. This man's situation was different from that of Job, whose "name was in the book of life;" who was one of those who "loved God," and therefore for whose final "good all things shall work together."⁴ Job was one of those whom Satan might "send a messenger to buffet,"⁵ but whom he could not injure or destroy. In this man, there was no proof of such a state; the evidence was all the other way; there was too much reason to fear that he was transgressing the commandments of Christ, because he never really belonged to him.⁶ Still there was hope. Suffering under the destruction of the flesh, he might turn unto the Lord, that he might have mercy upon him, and to our God, that he might abundantly pardon. He might exclaim, in the language of the prophet, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord our God. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."⁷ Thus *the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

There is, indeed, no necessary or sure connexion between suffering and repentance. Many are rather hardened, than softened, by affliction. But in the providence of God it sometimes happens that distress of mind or anguish of body become the outward means of bringing the heart to humble itself before God: from whose power, a man feels, there is no escape, and who may change temporal into everlasting sorrow.

⁴ Rom. viii. 28.

⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

⁶ 1 John ii. 19.

⁷ Lam. iii. 39—41.

Paul looks to such an effect of the punishment which he denounces against this Corinthian offender. But, at all events, he must not be suffered to disgrace the church, or give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme, as if one who professed and called himself a Christian, could remain a wilful sinner. “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”⁸ “And let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.”⁹

LECTURE LX.

THE SOCIETY OF THE WICKED MUST BE ABANDONED.

1 COR. V. 6—13.

6. *Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

The Corinthian Christians took much upon themselves. They boasted as if they could receive nothing and learn nothing from the apostle: were in no need of his counsels. Such *glorying* could *not be good* in any case. “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”¹ But least of all could those glory, who permitted a scandal like that which Paul had been condemn-

⁸ 1 Thess. iv. 7.

⁹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

¹ Gal. vi. 3.

ing to exist among their company. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* To suffer such an evil amongst them, degraded the whole christian body: in the same manner as a small portion of bad leaven is sufficient to alter the whole character of the mass into which it is admitted.

The principle of the gospel is, that the believer in Christ is redeemed from all iniquity, and brought over to the service of God: from a state of disobedience, converted to obedience. It was a contradiction of that principle to suppose that a man could remain a member of Christ, while living in wilful transgression of God's law. “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;”² allows himself in no habitual wickedness. To associate with a wilful transgressor as with a christian brother, was to annul and make void this principle: it was to maintain a principle widely different: namely, that a man might continue in sin, and yet enjoy the favour of God. Such a case would as certainly corrupt the whole body, as a portion, though a small portion, of bad leaven would corrupt the whole lump into which it was introduced: or as surely as any leaven used at the season of the passover would violate the commandment of the law. If they meant to preserve their christian character, they must clear themselves of all such examples and all such principles.

7. *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.³ For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:*

² 1 John iii. 9.

³ As ye are bound by your christian profession to be a new lump, pure from the leaven of corruption.

8. *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

There was a reason to abstain from sin, and abhor it. The mention of *unleavened bread* reminds him of the Passover, when such bread alone was allowed.⁴ And that reminds him of the real passover, the “true Paschal Lamb,” which was slain to take away the sin of the world. *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* When the destroying angel visited the land of Egypt the Israelites took each of them a lamb, “a lamb for a house,” and sprinkled its blood upon their doors: that the angel of death, when he saw the blood, might pass over their houses and spare them.⁵ This was a type of *Christ our passover*, through whom we trust that God may pass by our guilt, and account us righteous before him at the great day. But the sin which he will pass by, is sin forsaken, sin repented of: *therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of our unchanged unconverted nature, neither with any sort of malice or wickedness in our heart: but be as that unleavened bread which at the time of the Passover the law required and God approved: let all be sincerity of obedience and truth of purpose, without mixture of evil.*

But this could not be, if they allowed a heinous sinner to remain amongst them: an offence, which all the apostle’s former instructions had forbidden.

9. *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:*

10. *Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world,*

⁴ Ex. xii. 15.

⁵ Ex. xii. 23.

or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters ; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

He had written to them (as it would appear) in some former epistle, not to associate with any who refused to forsake sin. He now explains, that he had not meant to forbid their having any dealings with the Gentiles around them who lived according to the course of that evil world, out of which they were not delivered, and who practised without remorse the sins of uncleanness, covetousness, extortion, and idolatry. Surrounded as they were by heathen wickedness, they *must needs go out of the world* if they were never to keep company with such offenders. Besides, as he adds presently, with the heathen he had no concern. It was not his business to judge them. They who “sinned without law,” would be judged without law, by that master before whom they must stand or fall.⁶ What he had written related to those who had been baptized into the faith of Christ, and therefore professed a different principle. If these transgressed the law, which in baptism they pledged themselves to obey, other Christians must avoid them; refuse to be associated with them lest they suffer by the contagion.

11. *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner : with such an one no not to eat.*

12. *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?*

⁶ Rom. ii. 12; xiv. 4.

13. But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

An injury would be done to the cause of the gospel, if it could be supposed that one living in habits of impurity, or covetousness, or idolatry, or evil-speaking, or drunkenness, or extortion, could be reckoned among Christians. And these would be in danger, if they were to *keep company* with such a wilful transgressor of the law by which all were bound. Heathens who so lived, though offending against the law of God, violated no profession. They were not like those who said, “I go, sir, but went not.”⁷ Not like those who “professing to know God, in works deny him :”⁸ and by their unfaithfulness “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”⁹ Such *wicked persons* must be shown that they have neither part nor lot in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: they must be excluded from the kingdom of God on earth, lest they should suppose they can have any share of it in heaven. That kingdom is prepared for those, who “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present world.”¹ But “into it there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” For none who are such “are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”²

It is an awful reflection, how many among those who profess and call themselves Christians would fall under the apostle’s censure here:—*with such an one*

⁷ Matt. xxi. 30.

⁸ Tit. i. 16.

⁹ Heb. vi. 6.

¹ Tit. ii. 12.

² Rev. xxi. 27—29.

no not to eat. But thus is Scripture fulfilled; which has too plainly warned us, that “many are called, but few chosen.”³

LECTURE LXI.

THE CORINTHIANS REMINDED OF THE HOLINESS REQUIRED OF THEM.

1 COR. vi. 1—11.

1. *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*
2. *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?*
3. *Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*
4. *If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.*
5. *I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?*
6. *But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.*

We can easily suppose that a heathen magistrate would express surprise, if a cause between two Christians were brought before him. These Christians, he would say, profess to be seeking a kingdom which is not of this world. But the things of

³ Matt. xx. 16; xxii. 14.

this world have still charms for them. One defrauds his brother of them. And the brother is not content to lose them: he seeks the same remedy of law that we seek, whom they call *unjust*, and *unbelievers*. They profess to love one another as themselves; to treat all as they would desire to be treated: but these are mere words: we see that *brother goeth to law with brother*.

Thus the christian name would be brought into discredit, and the cause of Christ be hindered. Paul rebukes them sharply, for acting thus unworthily. For first, he says, they might have judges amongst themselves: and those might be set on this work, being a secular work, *who are least esteemed in the church*: least useful in spiritual things: least enriched with “utterance and knowledge.”¹ Surely among those who so prided themselves on their wisdom, might be found *a wise man that should be able to judge between his brethren*. For, what magnificent things had the Lord said concerning his people! (Matt. xix. 27.) “In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Thus the very “angels that sinned, and kept not their first estate,”² shall be judged by those who sit with Christ upon his throne: and surely *things that pertain to this life* may be directed by men for whom such signal honour is reserved: *if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?*

7. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you,

¹ Ch. i. 5.

² 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.

because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

8. *Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.*

Rather than draw down reproach upon the christian cause, why do ye not rather submit to suffer wrong? Was there no meaning in those words of their heavenly Lord, “If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also? And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”³ There is a time, when a christian spirit will yield a just claim rather than pursue it: when a man will refuse to “seek his own,”⁴ lest he should, in seeking it, injure that which is dearer to him than his own.

But even this is not the worst. Where there is an injury, there must be an author of the injury. *Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.* It was needful to remind them of what they seemed to have forgotten: that they were called to holiness and righteousness: “cleansed from their old sins,”⁵ that they might walk in newness of life, as “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

9. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,*

10. *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

³ Matt. v. 39.

⁴ Ch. xiii. 5.

⁵ See 2 Pet. i. 8, 9.

11. *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Thus he reminds them, how they had been delivered from a state which God looks upon with abhorrence, and placed in a state acceptable to him. At their baptism, they had been washed in the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin: they had been freed from condemnation, and accounted of God amongst his people: they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, to renew them in the spirit of their minds, and make them “meet to be partakers” of the heavenly inheritance.⁶ But of this they could not partake, without such meetness, such sanctification, such new heart and right spirit: for *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* If they *did wrong, and defrauded,* it was proof that they had not continued stedfast in the faith; for they “lacked those things” which must never be lacking in God’s children,⁷ and without which “an entrance could not be ministered to them into the kingdom of their Lord and Saviour.” Let them not *be deceived* in this, by the suggestion of their own corrupt hearts, or the false teaching of treacherous brethren.

If, however, we learn here the danger of being thus deceived, and so falling back into sins from which the grace of God is intended to deliver us: we also learn the power and efficacy of that grace. *Such were some of you.* So the apostle says to these Corinthians: ye had followed the devices of the flesh and of the mind, and in your former ignorance had

⁶ Col. i. 12.

⁷ 2 Pet. i. 9—11.

been given up to all the evil practices into which a corrupt nature would lead you. But ye are such no longer. *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.* That has come to pass in your case, which the prophet seemed to speak of as impossible; when he says, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then shall that man do good, who has been accustomed to do evil.”⁸ But “what is impossible with man, is possible with God;”⁹ and in his Gospel he has made provision for putting off the old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and for putting on the new nature, “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”¹⁰ And this is no vain boast, no matter of mere words. The apostle points to this picture, and to that. *Such were some of you:* but such ye are no longer. Ye have shown by your example, that as a man **MUST** be “born of water and of the Spirit,”¹¹ that he may enter into the kingdom of God: so he **MAY** be thus new born, and therefore fitted for that kingdom.

These things are written alike for our warning and encouragement. The warning is clear. *Know ye not, that the unrighteous, the unholy, the sensual, shall not inherit the kingdom of God?* But so likewise the encouragement is plain. For one who by God’s grace is alarmed by the warning, may reflect within himself after this manner: such am I. I have offended in those very things of which the apostle

⁸ Jer. xiii. 23.

⁹ Matt. xix. 26.

¹⁰ Eph. iv. 24.

¹¹ John iii. 2—5.

speaks. But so had some of those to whom he was writing. They had been pardoned: their sins *washed* out. I too may receive pardon. They had been *justified*. I too may be justified. They had been *sanctified*. I too may become “a new creature.” The habit of wickedness was not less strong in these Corinthians, than in any sinner now. At all times, the breaking off an old habit, the contending against an indulged sin, may be justly compared to the plucking out of a right eye, or the cutting off a right arm.³ But scripture, which tells us that it must be done, tells us also that it can be done; and that they who have committed those things which exclude a man from God’s favour, may yet be *sanctified*, may yet be *justified*, *in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*.

LECTURE LXII.

THE NECESSITY OF SELF DENIAL AND SANCTIFICATION.

1 COR. vi. 12—20.

12. *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

13. *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.*

³ Matt. v. 29, 30.

14. *And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.*

In what he had been before writing, St. Paul had been insisting upon a degree of sanctity to which the heart is not naturally disposed. Therefore he proceeds to show that the Christian in all respects must “keep under his body, and bring it into subjection.” With regard, for instance, to a matter which was much disputed between the Jewish and the heathen Christians; with regard to the use of certain meats; he takes the line of self-denial, and will not go even to the full length of lawfulness. *All things are lawful for me:* i. e. I know that “every creature of God is good” for the use of man,¹ and that the distinction exists no longer between things clean and unclean, meats lawful and meats forbidden. But though in this sense, *all things are lawful, all things are not expedient:* and I must not so indulge my appetite even in things allowable, as to make them necessary to me. *I must not be brought under the power of any.* I must so use my liberty, as to preserve it. Meats are to supply the wants of the body, and the body is prepared to receive them: but according to the ordinance of God, death shall soon *destroy both it and them:* both shall perish: and that which is beyond must be looked to, when *God who hath raised up the Lord, will also raise up us by his own power,* and “our vile body shall be made a glorious body,”² if it has been exercised in serving him, and restrained from offending him. *For the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* How dread-

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 4. Rom. xiv. 14.

² Phil. iii. 21.

ful, to employ that body in the practice of sin, which he has redeemed from eternal death, that it might be devoted to his glory !

15. *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot ? God forbid.*

16. *What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.³*

17. *But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*

18. *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*

19. *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

20. *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

The idea of being *bought with a price* would be very familiar among a people, whose household services were chiefly carried on by slaves. They knew that one is purchased as a slave, or redeemed from slavery, for a purpose: the purpose which the purchaser intends. Jesus Christ, who has “bought us with his own blood,”⁴ has a purpose in our ransom: “even our sanctification.”⁵ And to this end he gives his Holy Spirit to dwell in his people; to *be in them*: according to the first promise of St. Peter to his countrymen, “Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁶ Paul therefore here uses what might well be the strongest argument to

³ Gen. ii. 24.

⁴ Acts xx. 28.

⁵ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

⁶ Acts ii. 38.

deter the disciples from those sins which defile a man, which degrade his body, whilst they pollute his soul ; when he asks, *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?*

The Corinthians would readily understand his figure—*the temple*. Their city was full of temples in which the statue of the deity worshipped there was conspicuously placed. Like that mentioned at Ephesus (Acts xix. 27—35) raised in “honour of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter.” In the same manner, then, as among these idolaters a temple was built, and in it a statue erected, and it was called the temple of Jupiter or the temple of Diana : in the same manner their bodies, as Christians, were chosen and set apart, and rendered the *temples of the Holy Ghost, which they had of God.* The purpose of the real temple was to contain the statue. The Christian is designed to be the tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, which is in him, and makes him a sacred, peculiar person, dedicated to God and his glory. Therefore they were *not their own*, to use their body as they pleased : they could only use it in the way which God permitted, and to the purpose for which he redeemed and consecrated it : they must *glorify God in their body, and in their spirit, which were God's.*

God is *glorified*, when the members which he has framed, when the spirit which he has breathed, are employed to perform the duties for which they were designed ; the purposes of his will. He is glorified, when those appetites are kept within the bounds prescribed them, which he has implanted in us not

that they may rule and command, but be subject and obey. He is glorified, when a temptation to sin is resisted by the thought, “ How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?”⁷ He is glorified, when a lawful indulgence is refused, lest evil should result; as by Paul when he said, “ If meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend :”⁸ or by Daniel, when in the court of Babylon he purposed in his heart not to eat of the meat or drink of the wine which was set before him by order of the heathen king, lest he should be defiled.⁹ These and such like things *glorify God*, because in them he is recognised as Lord and King: as the “ God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways.”¹ And the glory thus given to him by one party, might extend beyond. Other Corinthians, seeing the christian church thus acting, might be brought to repentance and the knowledge of the truth. They might have long witnessed the return of seasons and the wonderful works of creation without concern,² and yet be struck by the spectacle of a righteous, sober, and godly Christian. For though “ the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work ;”³ the argument touches men more forcibly when they see one of like passions with themselves, keeping them in subjection, and bringing them into obedience to Him that is invisible.⁴ They see something done, of which they know the difficulty, and of which they understand the cost: and

⁷ Gen. xxxix. 9.

⁸ Ch. viii. 13.

⁹ Dan. i. 8.

¹ Dan. v. 23.

² See Rom. i. 20.

³ Ps. xix. 1.

⁴ See Chrysos. in loco.

that may in God's providence ensue of which the Lord speaks to his disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."⁵

LECTURE LXIII.

INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING MARRIAGE.

1 COR. vii. 1—17.

1. Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me : It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

The union of man and woman is the ordinance of God, instituted by him in the time of man's innocence. (Gen. ii. 18, 24.) "The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him." "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."¹ Paul could never intend to disparage or prohibit this union; for so the purpose of God in creating man would be defeated, and mankind cease to be.

Still there may be times and there may be circumstances which make a single life desirable: and, having these in view, the apostle answers a question proposed to him by the church at Corinth, saying, *It is good for a man to abstain from marriage.* He

⁵ Matt. v. 16.

¹ Matt. xix. 4—6.

may act wisely and piously in doing so. If a man be so disposed, let him so determine.

But this is an exception to the usual laws which govern mankind. The general rule is marriage.

2. *Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*

3. *Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence : and likewise also the wife unto the husband.*

4. *The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband : and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.*

5. *Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer ; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*

Very beautiful is the thought represented here ; the husband and wife joining to promote one another's eternal welfare, and rendering their earthly union subservient to heavenly purposes. Lest they should be brought under the power of even lawful things, lest the natural inclinations should gain undue dominion over them, they *give themselves* for a time *to fasting and prayer* : they have their proper seasons, when human affections must be restrained rather than indulged, and nothing be suffered to distract the mind from "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This would be to exemplify what was before spoken of: this would be "to glorify God in their body and their spirit, which are his." But they must always bear in mind that they "have an adversary, the devil," who will take advantage of every state to destroy the soul. He suits his snares to every condition of life, as well as to every character

of man: there are dangers to the single and dangers to the married: and none must be *ignorant of his devices*, or neglect to guard against them.

6. *But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.*²

7. *For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.*

8. *I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.*

9. *But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.*

10. *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:*

11. *But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.*

The Jews had rendered divorce so easy, by perverting the law, and “giving writings of divorce-
ment,”³ that the marriage bond had almost ceased to be a marriage bond. This was one of their cor-
ruptions which the Lord had expressly condemned. Paul was not speaking of his own authority, when he said, *Let not the wife depart from her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.* Christ had himself declared, (Matt. v. 32,) “Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of forni-
cation, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.”

But of the case that follows, the Lord had not

² I would be understood as *permitting* marriage, rather than *commanding* it.

³ Matt. v. 31; xix. 3—9.

given commandment: the case of a husband or a wife converted to the christian faith, whilst the partner remained an unbeliever. A question had arisen, Should these continue together? “Unequally yoked with an unbeliever,” should the believer continue bound by the marriage vow? To this Paul replies according to the wisdom given unto him.

12. *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.*

13. *And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.*

14. *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean: but now are they holy.*

The unbelieving husband, or the unbelieving wife, is *sanctified*. As there is only one that sanctifies, even the Spirit of God, so there is only one way by which any one can be sanctified, viz. “by the washing of regeneration and belief of the truth.”⁴ It is not, therefore, in that sense that the unbelieving husband or wife is *sanctified* by the believing partner: but the alliance is not unholy, such as ought to be discontinued: the unbelieving partner is not unclean, in the way in which those meats were unclean which were forbidden to the Jews, not to be touched by God’s people. *Else were your children unclean.* If it were otherwise, the children of such marriages would not be admissible to the covenant of baptism, any more than the children of idolaters to circumcision. But this is not the case. *Now are they holy:* are ac-

⁴ Tit. iii. 5.

cepted of God, as the children of his people. He pities their infirmities, and their difficulties: and will not reject the infants on account of the unbelieving partner, but regard them with favour for the sake of the believer.

It might happen, that the unbelieving party, “won by the christian conversation” of the other, might be brought to the same faith, and so the husband might save the wife, or the wife the husband. This would be a blessed consummation. It might also happen, that the unbeliever, offended by the stricter habits and purer life of the christian yoke-fellow, should choose to separate. Let this be borne with. *We are called to peace*, and not to strife; and should yield rather than contend.

15. *But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*

16. *For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?*

17. *But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.*

So admirably the christian faith adapts itself to the varying circumstances in which it may be placed, and always finds some mode of pleasing and serving God. It may be compared to a healthy plant, which in whatever soil it is growing, meets with something to feed upon. In a congenial soil it will flourish best, and ought not willingly to seek another: but forced of necessity into an unsuitable soil or climate, it will not be destroyed. Therefore, as *God hath*

distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk: let him make the best of the situation in which he is placed: if single, devoted to the Lord: if marrying, marrying “in the Lord:”⁵ if “unequally yoked,” recommending the faith by meekness, and gentleness, and “chaste conversation:” that “God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ,—to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.”⁶

LECTURE LXIV.

OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES NOT ALTERED BY THE GOSPEL.

1 COR. vii. 18—24.

18. *Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.*

19. *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.*

This is an answer to a question between the Jewish and the Gentile brethren. The Jewish Christians were disposed to say, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”¹ The Gentiles, perhaps, on their part, might speak disrespectfully of the law which the Jews esteemed, as being “old, and ready to vanish away.”² St. Paul’s

⁵ Infra, ver. 39.

⁶ 1 Pet. iv. 11.

¹ Acts xv. 1.

² Heb. viii. 13.

answer might satisfy both parties. If the case related to a Jew who had been converted, *let him not become uncircumcised*: let him retain such regard for the law as his early education required. Paul himself did this, on many occasions. That he might not offend the Jews, he caused Timothy to be circumcised, because his father was a Greek;³ and at Jerusalem he joined a party who were under a Nazarite vow, for no other purpose than to disarm the jealous scruples of his countrymen.⁴ “To the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews.”⁵ But, on the other hand, he would not suffer Titus, who was a Greek, to be circumcised, as was demanded by a Jewish party, who wished to bring the brethren into bondage.⁶ To them he would not yield, “no, not for an hour: that the truth of the Gospel” might not be impaired. For what was circumcision, in itself? An outward ordinance, reminding them that they were the people of God, who had bound them to himself by this covenant. But it is not by signs imprinted on the body, but by the subjection of the heart, that God is served. It is the mind, that keeps the commandments of God: the outward rite is nothing, but a sign that the commandments are to be kept. A soldier may wear the outward dress which distinguishes the army of his king and country: but his dress is nothing, if his heart is with the enemy, and if on every occasion he sides with the enemy against his king. And so he might “not be a Jew, who was one outwardly:” and that “circumcision was not circumcision, which was merely out-

³ Acts xvi. 3.

⁴ Acts xxi. 20—26.

⁵ Ch. ix. 20.

⁶ Gal. ii. 3, 4.

ward in the flesh.”⁷ A better covenant was now introduced, when God was to “ write his laws on their hearts;”⁸ and they should serve him, not according to the letter, but the spirit. Therefore, as he writes to the Romans, “ The kingdom of God ” does not rest on outward observances, “ is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;”⁹ so now he writes to the Corinthians, “ *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing: but the keeping of the commandments of God.* ” This was the real purpose of the law: which is also the purpose of the Gospel: designed as it was of God for the state of the world as it is, with all its circumstances, diversities, and conditions.

The same principle which applied to those who had been originally bound under the law of Moses, applied no less to another question on which the apostle had been consulted,—the case of *servants*, or slaves, when converted to the faith of Christ. The Gospel, he proceeds to say, leaves men’s outward circumstances as it finds them. It requires no change, but in the heart.

20. *Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.*

21. *Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.*

22. *For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called being free, is Christ’s servant.*

23. *Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.*

⁷ Rom. ii. 28.

⁸ Heb. viii. 10.

⁹ Rom. xiv. 17.

24. *Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.*

He thus warns servants (i. e. slaves) against any false impression they might naturally receive concerning the liberty of the Gospel. They were made free with the liberty wherewith Christ had freed them.¹ But this freedom was not from the yoke of an earthly master, but of Satan. And under the Gospel, the bondman and the freeman were alike. Each was free, and each was bound. Each was bound to the service of Christ. Each was free from that most grievous bondage, the bondage of sin: under which many suffer, who are lords over a multitude. “For whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin;” but he whom Christ has “made free, is free indeed,”² whether in the condition of Joseph as a slave, or of Joseph as a governor over all the land of Egypt.

They must not, therefore, be over anxious about earthly conditions. Freedom is better than slavery: and if thou mayest be made free, use it rather:³ but the thing of real consequence was not to be the servants of men, of wicked men, in obeying their call, and following their evil practices. Ye are bought with a price. See then your duty. Be not ye the servants of men. And this must be your answer when sinners entice you. For there are some who “promise liberty, but are themselves the servants of corruption.”⁴ And if any such should “think it

¹ Gal. v. 1.

² John viii. 34—36.

³ Chrysostom singularly refers this to slavery; and would explain it, use slavery rather.

⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 19.

strange, that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot," *ye are bought with a price* to this very end, "that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."⁵

But though there was no change in the civil or worldly condition, the slave was to be still a slave, and the freeman still a freeman: there was another and a great change required; that a man carry on that worldly business with God, which he had before carried on without God. *Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Art thou called being a freeman?* Remember, that however exempt a man may be from the yoke of his fellow creatures, he must still "give account of himself to God."⁶ *Art thou called being a servant?* "Be not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."⁷ "knowing that whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."⁸ *Is any man called being circumcised?* Let him remember, that "except his righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, he shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."⁹ *Is any called in uncircumcision?* Let him be "under the law to Christ;"¹ for there is a "circumcision of the heart," which is of perpetual obligation, which "through the Spirit mortifies the deeds of the body."² For "we must all stand before the judgment seat of God," where there will be "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision,

⁵ 1 Pet. iv. 2—4.

⁶ Rom. xiv. 12.

⁷ Rom. xii. 11.

⁸ Eph. vi. 8.

⁹ Matt. v. 20.

¹ Ch. ix. 21.

² Rom. viii. 13.

bond nor free :”² where national privileges and outward signs will be nothing; *but the keeping of the commandments of God* will alone avail. “He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness,” shall “abide in the tabernacle of the Lord, and shall dwell in his holy hill” for ever.³

LECTURE LXV.

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING MARRIAGE.

1 COR. vii. 25—40.

25. *Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.*

26. *I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.*

27. *Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.*

28. *But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.*

In the circumstances of the church in those days, it might be well for a man to be disengaged of all that might entangle him, and make duty difficult. When any one was threatened with imprisonment, with loss of life and property, as in the seasons of persecution all were liable to be threatened; we know how the

² Col. iii. 11.

³ Ps. xv. 1, 2.

thoughts of a wife deserted, or a family left destitute, would harass the mind, and endanger faithfulness. Among other hardships suffered by the Hebrew disciples, St. Paul says of them, “Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.”¹ And among the evils imposed by Paul himself upon some of the earlier converts, “men and women were haled, and cast into prison.”² All these trials fell more heavily upon families, than upon those who were free from domestic ties. Therefore the apostle warns the married, *Such shall have trouble in the flesh.* It is not, because he thinks the single state more holy or more pleasing to God than the state of marriage, that he judges it better for one who is *loosed from a wife not to seek a wife.* It is not, because marriage is not honourable in all.³ To affirm the contrary, would be to cast reproach upon the ordinance of God. But, as our Lord said concerning the calamities which were to befall Jerusalem, “Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days;”⁴ so the apostle, considering *the present distress*, looking at the trials and persecutions to which the Christians were exposed, thought those happiest who were free from the anxiety which adds fresh bitterness to trials and persecutions. They might come to be so careful and troubled about the many things which affect the interests of a wife and family, as to forget that “one thing is needful.”⁵

29. *But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;*

¹ Heb. x. 34.

² Acts viii. 3.

³ Heb. xiii. 4.

⁴ Matt. xxiv. 19.

⁵ Luke x. 42.

30. *And they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ;*

31. *And they that use this world as not abusing it ; for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

32. *But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord :*

33. *But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*

34. *There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit ; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*

35. *And this I speak for your own profit ; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.*

36. *But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not : let them marry.*

37. *Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.*

38. *So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well : but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.*

39. *The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth ; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will ; only in the Lord.*

40. *But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment : and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.⁶*

The danger which St. Paul fears and guards

* I suppose : i. e. I know. The original phrase is not one which implies doubt, but expresses certainty.

against will not be incurred by those who attend to the instruction here given. *Let them marry: only in the Lord.* Let them “not be unequally yoked together:”⁷ the “children of light,” with “the children of this generation.” Two cannot “walk together except they be agreed.”⁸ One cannot serve God, whilst the other is serving Mammon, without constant *distraction*: and it is very difficult to keep the main object stedfastly before us, and “to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” in company with those who “have their portion in this world.” It must have added sorely to the painfulness of Job’s trial, when “his wife came to him and said, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die.” Only one who was largely endowed with the Spirit of holiness, could have answered as Job answered: “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?”⁹

Therefore Paul says, *I would have you without carefulness.* I would have you free from the anxiety with which you may be too probably perplexed, if united to a partner who is not like-minded with yourselves. For then two duties clash together: the duty to God, and the duty to wife or husband.

The commandment is, that “husbands love their wives,” and that “wives be subject to their own husbands in everything.” And whilst each *careth* equally *for the things of the Lord*: as long as the great purpose is, that the union which has been commenced on

⁷ 2 Cor. vi. 14.

⁸ Amos iii. 3.

⁹ Job ii. 9, 10.

¹ Eph. v. 22—25.

earth should last for ever in heaven: then each helps the other on the way, as they journey towards “Zion with their faces thitherward.”² But if one *care for the things of the world*, it becomes difficult for the other to *please the Lord, to attend upon the Lord, without distraction*. Take the case, for instance, of Ananias and his wife Sapphira.³ It happened that they were but too well agreed in their hypocrisy. But suppose, as we may easily suppose, that Ananias had been prepared, with all the self-denial of Joses,⁴ to sell his possessions, and lay the price at the apostles’ feet: whilst Sapphira clung to the world and the things of the world, and was not disposed to give up lands or houses for the gospel’s sake. Then would occur the difficulty which St. Paul foresees and fears. *He that is married, careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.* A rival interest, and a rival affection, makes it doubly difficult to *please the Lord*.

All therefore is to be resolved into that consideration, *Brethren, the time is short.* Keep free from any other anxiety, than how best to pass through things temporal so as not to lose things eternal. The time is short, during which possessions can be occupied, the world indulged in, the endearments of a family enjoyed. *It remaineth*, that we “set our affections on things above, and not on things of the earth:” that we so use earthly things, as to be ready to resign them. *For the fashion of this world passeth away.* And “there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brother, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold

² Jer. 1. 5.

³ Acts. v. 1—8.

⁴ Acts iv. 37.

more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”⁵

LECTURE LXVI.

IDOLATROUS FEASTS TO BE AVOIDED BY CHRISTIANS.

1 COR. viii.

1. *Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*

2. *And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*

3. *But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*

A common mode of worship among the heathens was first to sacrifice the victim, and afterwards to feast upon the victim which had been so sacrificed. Those who had been converted from idolatry, took, of course, no part in the ceremony of sacrificing. It became a question, whether they were at liberty to partake of the feast which followed. What is an idol? some said. *We all have knowledge that an idol is nothing in the world.* And therefore the food is not altered, though it may have been offered in sacrifice; and we may eat of it as well as of any other food. Some, it appears, were proud of this knowledge; boasted of being above prejudices; and despised the weaker brethren who had scruples. St.

⁵ Matt. xviii. 29, 30.

Paul reminds them, that knowledge is good, but charity is better. It is well to be convinced of the vanity of idols: but mere *knowledge puffeth up*: that *charity*, which is afraid of injuring or offending a brother, is truly *edifying*: it is the proper use of knowledge. And if any man boast of his knowledge, *think that he knoweth any thing*, he has still everything to learn: *he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*. Humility, not self-conceit, is the fruit of real knowledge. The first and greatest knowledge is the knowledge of God: happy is any man who has been taught not only to despise idols, but to know "Him that is true."¹ *If any man love God, the same is known of him*. God, unto whom all hearts are open, "knoweth them that are his":² knoweth those who have set their hearts upon him, though it may be in much weakness and fear. He knows also whether it is true acquaintance with him, or rather a desire of self-indulgence, which prompts to the partaking of the sacrifice. And certainly that man would deceive himself, who should profess to love God, and yet disregard his brother.³

4. *As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.*

5. *For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)* ⁴

6. *But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

¹ 1 John v. 20.

² 2 Tim. ii. 19.

³ 1 John iv. 20.

⁴ Many so esteemed and styled among the heathens.

7. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge : for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol ; and their conscience being weak, is defiled.

The feast upon the sacrifice was a part of the sacrifice ; a part, therefore, of idolatrous worship. And some, says St. Paul, unto this hour cannot rid themselves of their old feelings, and whilst they eat have a veneration for the idol. This is defiling. And to lead them by example into danger of this defilement is not according to that *charity* which *edifieth*.

The case may be illustrated from the history of the Syrian Naaman.⁵ The prophet Elisha had made him acquainted with the true God, and he was returning to his country convinced that there was “no God in all the earth but in Israel.” But before his departure he obtained permission from the prophet to attend the king his master into the temple of Rimmon, and to bow before the idol as the king bowed, who leaned upon him. He might do this without injury to his peace, knowing that *the idol was nothing in the world*, and that he appeared before it not as a worshipper but as an office-bearer. Yet it was quite probable that others of the Syrians, not having the same knowledge, and holding the idol in superstitious reverence, might be misled by his example, and their conscience be defiled.

Guarding against these evils, the apostle reminds the Corinthians, as he had before reminded the Romans, that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink :”⁶ is not liberty and self-indulgence : but rather charity and self-denial.

⁵ 2 Kings v. 15—19.

⁶ Rom. xiv. 17.

8. *But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.*

9. *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

10. *For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;*

11. *And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?*

12. *But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*

13. *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

The Christian in all things will consider the effect which his conduct may have upon others as well as on himself. Among the Corinthians, it was easy to conceive a person who had arrived at some knowledge of the truth, and was on the point of withdrawing himself altogether from idolatry:⁷ but when he saw still lingering about the temple one whom he looked upon as a converted Christian, he would take that habit of his as a recommendation, and remain there also to his hurt, because *with conscience of the idol*. So the *liberty* of one became a *stumblingblock* to another. As it might happen now, that a Protestant entering into a Roman Catholic chapel, either to gratify his curiosity, or because no other place of worship was within his reach, might lead an ignorant person to believe, that between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants there was little important differ-

⁷ Chrysos. in loco.

ence. Another, whilst present at the Romish service, might bow at the Virgin's name, or fall on his knees at the elevation of the Host, out of courtesy towards those who were worshipping around him. He would be paying no real worship, and it might seem an innocent concession. But he would offend against the rule here laid down by St. Paul. His belief would *become a stumblingblock to them that are weak*. Their *conscience* would be thus *emboldened* to persist in the worship of the creature instead of the Creator. And so, contributing to maintain a brother in error, he would *sin against Christ*. Rather than this, the apostle declares there is no indulgence he would not renounce, no inclination he would not refuse to gratify. For the Lord has said, “Woe unto that man by whom offence cometh;” offence, by which “one of his little ones” is injured.”⁸

This is the true test of the value of the soul:—of our own soul, and of the souls of others:—they are souls, *for which Christ died*: which he “purchased with his blood.”⁹ And what sense could that man entertain, either of the ransom which was paid, or of the soul which was redeemed, who by his example, and by indulging his own gratification, should cause a *weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died?*

⁸ Matt. xviii. 6—10.

⁹ Acts xx. 28.

LECTURE LXVII.

THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH THE PROOF OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP.

1 COR. ix. 1, 2.

1. *Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?*

Such is human nature, that even St. Paul became an object of jealousy, and was obliged to defend himself before his Corinthian disciples. His enemies had tried to lessen his authority; and probably had contrasted his case with that of men who had accompanied the Lord from the beginning, and been eye-witnesses of his majesty.¹

To these he replies, that none had more claim, were more *free* than himself, to use all the privileges of an apostle. Jesus Christ had manifested himself to him *in the flesh*, though to him “last of all.”² And further, since he is an apostle who does the work of an apostle, and he has knowledge of Christ whom Christ has recognised and made the minister of his grace, *Are not ye, my work in the Lord?* Of all places, and of all persons, Corinth and the Corinthians ought to be the least disposed to question his authority and commission.

2. *If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*

¹ See Luke i. 2.

² Ch. xv. 8.

A seal is used to authenticate a record; to prove that it comes from him whose name it bears, and whose authority it claims. When queen Jezebel in Ahab's name sent orders for the death of Naboth, she sealed the letters with Ahab's seal, that they might have the king's authority.³ When king Ahasuerus meditated the destruction of all the Jews throughout his kingdom, the writing which conveyed the order was sealed with the king's ring.⁴ The seal shows that he who bears the writing comes from him who seals the writing.

Therefore the Lord Jesus affirms concerning himself, "that he is the Son; and him hath God the Father *sealed*."⁵ And St. Paul describes the Ephesians, as "*sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise:"⁶ shown to be the Lord's, who had put his Spirit, as it were his *seal*, upon them.

In the same sense he now alleges the Corinthian church as proof of his apostleship: proof that he was sent of God to preach "the gospel of the kingdom." They were to him, what the king's seal is to the ambassador: signs that he speaks not for himself, but for the king his master.

Because when the seed of the word, whether at Corinth or elsewhere, falls upon an honest and good heart, and springs up, and brings forth fruit; it proves that another has been there, as well as he who has taught or spoken: just as the seal on the letters of queen Jezebel or king Ahasuerus proved that they came from the royal hand. Paul sowed the seed of the word, when he "reasoned in the

³ 1 Kings xxi. 8.

⁴ Esther iii. 12.

⁵ John vi. 27.

⁶ Eph. i. 13.

synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks.”⁷ But it would have fallen by the way-side, and have produced no fruit, unless the Spirit of God had opened the hearts of the hearers to receive it, and had fed and nourished it when there. No man can come unto the Lord, “unless the Father draw him.”⁸ “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”⁹ “Paul plants, Apollos waters; but it is God that giveth the increase.”¹

When therefore Paul, in the character of an apostle, preached the Gospel at Corinth, and when “many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed:” the Lord did as it were set his seal to the apostle’s commission; and Paul might appeal to any one among them, and say, If there is one who on my teaching has been brought to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to trust in him for salvation, that man bears upon his heart the impress of God’s own seal: and what is there impressed is the proof of my apostleship. If I had not been an apostle of God, God would not have been present to enforce my words: and if God had not enforced my words, they would never have been effectual to bring one soul out of darkness. The Jew would have remained obstinate in his prejudices; the idolater would have adhered to his vanities. Therefore *the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord.* They could not deny him to be an apostle, unless they denied that they themselves were Christians.

Such, then, is the proof which Paul thought proper to allege, when his authority was disputed or denied.

⁷ Acts xviii. 4.

⁸ John vi. 44.

⁹ 1 John v. 1.

¹ Ch. iii. 6.

On other occasions, he describes the extraordinary call which he received, when the Lord appeared to him on his journey to Damascus.² Sometimes, again, he mentions the visions and revelations shown him;³ and sometimes “the signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds wrought” in the presence of his hearers.⁴ But here he appeals to a test, which might leave to succeeding ages the surest sign of divine favour. Future “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,” would neither see revelations, nor work miracles, nor hear a voice from heaven calling to them. These seals to Paul’s ministry would not belong to them. But they might have this *seal of their apostleship*, a people converted to God. No man can be converted to God, except by God himself: and no minister can be the instrument of such conversion, unless God favours his work and crowns it with his blessing.

Undoubtedly there may be ministers both truly called and faithful, who have no such living evidence of God’s Spirit working with them: there may be reasons in the people, and not in the minister himself, why he has laboured, and there has been no increase to his labours. God may have seen fit to withhold the rain from the field, though the husbandman may have been duly sent, though the seed which he has sown may have been good seed. But where there *is* that success, which is commonly vouchsafed in some degree to faithfulness and diligence: if there springs up “first the blade, and then the ear, and

² Acts xxii. 6; xxvi. 12.

³ 2 Cor. xii. 1; Gal. i. 16.

⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 12.

afterward the full corn in the ear :”⁵ it is the Lord’s doing, the sign of his blessing on the work; he has thus given assurance of his favour which can never be denied. That is accomplished, for which apostles were called and commissioned. Men are brought “from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.”⁶

This subject must not be closed without observing, that what is here represented as the seal of an apostleship, is also the seal of a christian profession: viz. a converted heart, a life guided by the precepts of Christ: a heart, in which not pride and haughtiness, but gentleness and humility;—not malice and hatred, but love and goodwill;—not sensuality, but purity;—not selfishness and covetousness, but liberality and brotherly kindness prevail. For these are the signs of the Spirit of God: the impression of his seal upon those hearts, which are his indeed. And if any man have not this seal, “have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his :”⁷ will not be owned of him at last; and instead of the gracious words of welcome, must expect to hear the awful sentence, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”⁸

⁵ Mark iv. 28.

⁶ Acts xxvi. 18.

⁷ Rom. viii. 9.

⁸ Matt. xxv. 12.

LECTURE LXVIII.

PAUL ASSERTS HIS CLAIM TO SUPPORT FROM THOSE
TO WHOM HE PREACHED THE GOSPEL.

1 Cor. ix. 3—12.

3. *Mine answer to them that do examine me is this :*
4. *Have we not power to eat and to drink ?*
5. *Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas ?*
6. *Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working ?*

St. Paul had been accused, it seems, of making a profit of the disciples, and living at their expense.

This may supply ground of comfort to others, if they suffer under similar imputations. Who shall escape such charges, if they are laid against a man like Paul, who had laboured with his own hands to avoid it, and who did not avail himself of the claim he proves?¹

His *answer to them that would examine him is this.* He claims his privilege of support for himself and those belonging to him. Others carried about *a sister, a wife*, with them : as Peter, constantly:² and *other apostles, and the brethren of the Lord*, James and Jude.³ Was the necessity of *working* for a

¹ See 2 Cor. xi. 17.

² So we are informed by Clement.

³ Gal. i. 19. James is called “the Lord’s brother;” meaning kinsman.

livelihood to be imposed on him alone and Barnabas?

In the more ordinary business of life, this would be confessedly unreasonable.

7. Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

The apostles were carrying on *a warfare*: contending against the enemies of man's salvation. Surely if the soldier whilst defending his country is entitled to his support and pay, this ought not to be denied to one who is attacking Satan in his strongholds, and despoiling him of his goods. He *who planteth a vineyard* looks for fruit from the trees which he has tended. The apostle was engaged in a like manner. The Corinthian church was a “garden of God,”⁴ filled with trees of his planting: and ought it to be matter of jealousy, if those trees yielded him a return? One *who feedeth a flock, eateth of the milk of the flock*: and when the Lord gave commandment to his apostle, “Feed my sheep, feed my lambs;”⁵ it was not his design that this should be the only shepherd who tended the flock, and was not supported for his pains.

But these were such arguments as a man might use, taken from the common course and nature of the world. Paul had another *answer to them that would examine him*, taken from the ordinances of Moses, the law of God himself.

*8. Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?*⁶

⁴ Isa. li. 3.

⁵ John xxi. 16.

⁶ Deut. xxv. 4.

9. *For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?*

10. *Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

11. *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*

12. *If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.*

God has sanctioned the principle, that the labourer should be maintained; that one who supplies others, should be himself supplied. *The ox that treadeth out the corn*, provides the food which the body needs: and meanwhile his own wants are provided for: he himself is fed. The apostles furnished the “true bread from heaven:”⁷ that which nourishes not the perishing body, but the imperishable soul: “the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man might eat thereof and not die.”⁸ Was it much that he should receive “the bread that perisheth,” in return for that which giveth everlasting life? Should not the principle which made provision for the labourer in the field, avail for those who laboured in the Gospel? The sower who soweth the word of God, the spiritual seed,⁹ should *plow in hope and thresh in hope*, that the maintenance which he required would be returned to him: and at last should *be partaker of his hope*: his just expectation should not disappoint him.

⁷ John vi. 32.

⁸ John vi. 50.

⁹ Mark iv. 14.

It is the covetous part of human nature, which grudges *carnal things* to those who impart *spiritual things*. And the bent of the heart is thus shown. When men are earnest to gain an object, they think little of the cost. When Balak believed that he might prevail against the Israelites, if the prophet Balaam should denounce a curse upon them, a “house full of silver and gold” did not seem too much to offer: “I will promote thee (he said) unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.”¹ Had he offered the same rewards, and his message been, Come, show me the way of everlasting life,—he would have proved that everlasting life had real value in his eyes. The Shunamite lady did prove this, in her conduct towards the prophet Elisha.² Elisha was in the habit of passing by her house: and “she constrained him, as he passed by, to turn in and eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, in the wall: and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in hither.” She received his *spiritual things*, and thought it *not great that he should reap her carnal things*. And if a different spirit is shown, it either proves that we value carnal things too much, or spiritual things too little: that the care of the soul is very differently estimated from the care of the body. For the Syrian Naaman, when he set out to seek from the pro-

¹ Numb. xxii. 16, 17.

² 2 Kings iv.

phet of Israel a remedy for his leprosy, “ took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.”³ And when he had received his cure, “ Now,” he said, “ I pray thee take a blessing of thy servant. And he urged him to take it.”

If a like feeling is not shown towards the man who offers not health only, but life, and not to the body, but the soul, there is convincing proof that we understand more of temporal than eternal things, and think more of laying up treasure upon earth than in heaven.

Paul, however, thus argues with the Corinthians for truth’s sake and religion’s sake, and not with a view to his own interest. For himself, he *used not this power*. He had more claim than any: others could be but instructors, he was their father in the faith: *if others be partakers of this power over you, should not we rather?*

But he preferred to show, that he sought not theirs, but them: and would *suffer all things*, rather than cause any impediment to the progress of the Gospel. That might be hindered, if he enforced even his just claim. For though as many as loved the Lord, would receive a prophet of the Lord for his Lord’s sake; there were others either without faith, or with weak faith, who might be turned aside if he were charged, though unjustly charged, with self-interest or covetousness: and so an ignorant fellow creature, for whom Christ died, might perish in his sins.⁴

³ 2 Kings v. 5—16.

⁴ Ch. viii. 11.

LECTURE LXIX.

PAUL ASSERTS HIS DISINTERESTEDNESS.

1 COR. ix. 13—23.

13. *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?*

14. *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

15. *But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.*

16. *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

17. *For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*

18. *What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.*

Paul here separates his own case from that of others, who might be employed like himself in preaching the Gospel. His companion Barnabas, for example;¹ who being “a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” This is

¹ Acts iv. 36.

the case of one who of his own choice and free-will devotes himself to the cause of Christ: deliberately gives up this world for the sake of that which is to come. He *does this willingly, and has a reward.* Paul's own case was different. Instead of surrendering himself to God, as Barnabas; he was arrested of God. He was made “a chosen vessel,” “to know his will, and be his witness unto all men of what he had seen and heard.”² *Necessity was laid upon him: yea, woe be to him, if he preached not the gospel.*

But though in this sense no choice was left him, when *a dispensation of the gospel was committed to him*, and he was ordained a steward of its mysteries; yet he resolved to show himself a willing minister. As we may suppose a slave—the property of his master, and therefore under necessity:—but proving his ready service, by refusing privileges which he might claim. So with the apostle. *What is my reward?* he asks. What entitles me to the everlasting recompense promised to the good and faithful servant? *Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.* He might claim the right given him by the Lord Jesus;³ *they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.* He might claim that maintenance under the gospel, which was enjoyed by the Levites under the law: when *they which ministered about holy things lived of the things of the temple; and they which waited at the altar were partakers with the altar:*⁴ had their regular provision assigned

² Acts ix. 14; xxii. 15.

³ Matt. x. 9, 10. Luke x. 7.

⁴ Numbers xviii.

them from the sacrifices which were offered, as well as from the produce of the land. He had the same title to maintenance. “For the labourer is worthy of his hire.” *But he had used none of these things: it were better for him to die, than that any man should make his glorying void:* deprive him of the testimony of his conscience, that freely, simply, and disinterestedly he had exercised the ministry entrusted to him, with no regard but to the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind.

Far, indeed, was he from *abusing his power in the Gospel.* In other points also he had surrendered it. Though he owned no superior, he had *made himself servant to all,* and yielded where he might have ruled, in hope of obtaining influence and good will.

19. *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

20. *And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

21. *To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

22. *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

23. *And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

From what we know of Paul’s character, we cannot suppose that it was very natural for him to yield. But he had yielded, and given way to others, wherever he could do so with a safe conscience. That there might be no prejudice against Timothy

amongst the Jewish brethren, who were aware that his father was a Greek, he caused him to be circumcised;⁵ though knowing “that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”⁶ Still more remarkably, going up to Jerusalem two years after the date of this letter, he consented to join a company who were fulfilling a vow, and appeared publicly in the temple, as one that “walked orderly, and kept the law” of Moses.⁷ It was no slight concession, in one who had contended so earnestly, when he saw it to be needful, to free the Gentiles from the ordinances of the law.⁸ And it was done expressly *for the gospel's sake*, to conciliate the “many thousands of Jews who believed and were all zealous of the law.”

So to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews. On the other hand, for the Gentiles who were *without law*—who had never been bound under the law of Moses—he resolutely claimed exemption from all such ordinances.⁹ He even withstood the example and authority of Peter, who was taking a different course, and had ceased to eat with the heathen disciples, out of regard to the prejudices of his countrymen.¹

So again to the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak: he would not offend the scruples of those who feared to partake of the meat which had been offered in idolatrous sacrifices, though having knowledge that such scruples were without

⁵ Acts xvi. 3.

⁶ Gal. vi. 15.

⁷ Acts xxi. 20—26.

⁸ Acts xv. 2—35.

⁹ Gal. ii. 3, &c.

¹ Gal. ii. 11—16.

foundation.² He would “neither eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby his brother stumbleth or is offended.”³ Thus yielding his own liberty to obtain and secure the good will of others.

It is a trial of christian wisdom and faithfulness, whether to oppose or comply with the prejudices of those with whom we have to do. Either may be right: either may also be altogether wrong. What was blamable in Peter, in one case, appeared proper to Paul in another. Each conformed to the feelings of their countrymen: Paul by purifying himself in the temple: Peter by separating himself from the Gentile. Both did the same thing: but the circumstances justified one, and not the other. Paul was in Jerusalem, in the midst of Jews; and by not alarming the people, as if he despised Moses, and set aside their ancient customs, he might *gain the more*. Peter was at Antioch, in the midst of Gentiles then just turning towards the Gospel: and he might lose those whom he was commissioned to save, if he affrighted them with the prospect of the law of Moses.

Therefore there are cases and seasons when we may become *all things to all men*: and there are also times and cases when any such compliance must be eschewed.

We have to beware, on the one hand, of obstinacy and self-will: and on the other, to guard against that “fear of man which bringeth a snare.” “It is easy to think ourselves upright in our intentions, when we are really actuated by a desire of man’s applause, or a dread of his displeasure. It is

² Rom. xiv. 14.

³ Rom. xiv. 20—23.

easy also to believe that we are sacrificing our own wishes for the good of others, when we are only gratifying our own selfish feelings. In these things none but God can keep us from error. Pray that his Spirit may “guide you into all truth:”⁴ and enable you “in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, to have your conversation in the world.”⁵

LECTURE LXX.

EXHORTATION TO LABOUR AND SELF-DENIAL.

1 COR. ix. 24—27.

24. *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

St. Paul suits his example to the habits of the people to whom he was writing. It would not occur to ourselves, in these days, to represent the competitors in a race as an example to Christians. In our eyes the comparison would want dignity. To *run in a race* for a prize, and to seek the kingdom of heaven, seem things hardly fit to be compared together. But with the Corinthians such contests were honourable enough to be worthy of any one's notice or ambition. To *receive the prize*, as the best runner, or leaper, or boxer, or wrestler, was an object earnestly desired, and eagerly contended for. And there-

⁴ Simeon, Horæ Homilet. 962.

⁵ 2 Cor. i. 12.

fore Paul argues from these feats of strength or activity, and leads the Christians to examine themselves and judge of their own practice by those who engaged in them.

And first he reminds them that out of the large company which enters the course, *only one receiveth the prize*. Many fail, and are disappointed. In the same way as among those to whom talents are assigned, in our Lord's parable: not all receive the approbation of their lord.¹ In the same way as of the party which set out together to celebrate the marriage, some entered into the joy of their lord; against others the door was shut. Let the Corinthians take warning. They were engaged in a race, and the prize was heaven. In this respect it was not like the garland of the conqueror in the games, which only *one* could wear. In another respect it was like; that it might be missed, and that it required exertion. *So run, that ye may obtain.* So exercise yourselves to “keep a conscience void of offence,” that ye may at the last receive “the prize of the high calling which is before you.” For not every one who professes to be Christ's disciple, and “says unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven.”²

Those who contend in a race, or in any such games, set another example, besides that of many of them losing the prize.

25. *And every man that striveth for the mastery is tem-*

¹ Matt. xxv. 31, and 12.

² Matt. vii. 21.

perate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible.

The Christian might justly feel humbled by comparing his way of living with the practice of those competitors for victory. They were very unlike a man who could risk the injuring a brother, rather than refuse himself the indulgence of meat in the heathen temples : or grudge to the ministers of Christ who taught him the way of salvation the maintenance which their necessities required. They were *temperate in all things*. They submitted to great self-denial. They accustomed themselves to severe labour. They bore a continual cross in preparing for the contest on which the prize depended. And yet what was that prize ? A fading *corruptible crown* of leaves or flowers. How different from the “crown of glory, which fadeth not away ?” which “the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give in that day to all them that love his appearing.”³

For this prize, says the apostle, I strive in earnest, and therefore with confidence of victory.

26. *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ;⁴ so fight I, not as one that beateth the air :*

27. *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection : lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

To run *uncertainly*, is to strive where success is doubtful. St. Paul was so striving, as to “make his calling and election sure.” To fight, as *one beating*

³ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

⁴ οὐ γαρ αἰηλος μοι στεφανος. Theod.

the air, is to strike at random and without aim. Paul was earnest, being well aware that he had to contend against a powerful adversary, whom nothing except determined and persevering efforts would subdue. For such is our corrupt nature: unless vigorously or resolutely opposed, it will retain or regain the mastery. Therefore Paul says he did oppose it: he kept it down or buffeted it: he treated it as one that must obey as a servant, not rule as a lord. Because he knew that on this his salvation depended: for “if we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.” And how grievous, if after having preached, and preached successfully to others, so that they should be approved of God, he himself should be *a castaway*;⁵ disallowed of the Judge, and not counted worthy of the crown.

Here he glances at the faults which were too evident among the Corinthians: and guards against jealousy, by instancing his own practice, and leading them to compare it with that which they dared to pursue. Was it needful for the apostle to *keep under his body and bring it into subjection?* Then surely there are none to whom it is not needful. He was, by his course of duty, obliged to be “in fastings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness.”⁶ And yet he must attend to the risings of sin in his nature, and subdue them. Who then may be careless and self-indulgent? Who may venture to sit at ease, and suppose either that there

⁵ Strictly, like counterfeit money, which will not pass, ἀδοκιμος.

⁶ 2 Cor. xi. 27.

is nothing to be done, or that Christ has done all for them ?

There is, indeed, a kind of “ bodily exercise,” which “ profiteth little :”⁷ has no meaning or purpose in it : is regular and stated, and not arising out of circumstances. Such is abstinence from meat, “ which God has commanded to be received,” without reason for abstaining : when neither “ if we eat, are we the worse, nor if we eat not, are we the better.”⁸ What benefit, for instance, can it prove to the soul, as the practice of some is, that nothing should be tasted in the day before the Lord’s Supper is partaken of ? Or that certain sorts of food should be abstained from or allowed, at certain seasons of the year ? But to say with the apostle, “ All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient : I will not be brought under the power of any.”⁹ To say, “ I will eat no meat whilst the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend :”¹ this is christian self-denial. To watch against those indulgences, which give Satan an advantage over us, and so to “ mortify the members,” as to subdue the evil “ desires of the flesh and of the mind :” this is to *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection.* And with such watchfulness, such abstinence, such holy fear, such earnestness in “ working out our salvation,” “ God is well pleased.”

⁷ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

⁹ Ch. vi. 12.

⁸ Ch. viii. 8.

¹ Ib. 13.

LECTURE LXXI.

THE DANGER OF ABUSING THE FAVOUR OF GOD.

1 COR. X. 1—11.

1. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea :*
2. *And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea ;*
3. *And did all eat the same spiritual meat ;*
4. *And did all drink the same spiritual drink : for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them : and that Rock was Christ.*

These signs of God's favour had been granted to the Israelites formerly ; privileges such as the Corinthian church enjoyed now : but they did not secure their safety any longer than they secured their obedience.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of this : he saw the danger to which they were liable, lest it should be with them as with the Jews : who were “Abraham's children :” were in possession of the law : were circumcised : observed many rites and ceremonies : and thus quieted conscience, and spared themselves the labour of obedience.¹ So he goes back to the Jewish history, and shows how little outward privileges had availed that people formerly, when their conduct became contrary to their profession. You, he intimates, have been baptized into the faith of Christ,

¹ See Rom. ii. 17—23.

and so brought into covenant with God. So likewise were *our fathers*: they were under the protection of God: they were *under the cloud* which gave them light by night and shade by day: they *all passed through the sea* which made a way for them: and were then as it were *baptized unto Moses*: devoted to God and made his people as much as Christians now. They too had the same mercies to sustain them. If the Christian may boast that he partakes of the bread of life, the “true bread from heaven:”² the Israelites might likewise boast that Moses gave their fathers manna in the wilderness. If the Christian had the waters of life; those waters which “whosoever drinketh shall never thirst:”³ the Israelites also drank water from the rock, which for their sake gushed forth in an abundant stream.⁴ And *that rock was Christ*: he who watches over his people now, watched over his people then: he was with “his own,” though his own “knew him not:”⁵ and under the law, as well as under the gospel, he had a flock who “heard his voice and followed him.”⁶

Our fathers, therefore, like ourselves, enjoyed God’s favour: they had an ordinance which devoted them to him: they had *spiritual food*, and *spiritual drink*,⁷ as we have the body and blood of Christ. But these privileges were not instead of obedience; they were means and motives to obedience; and drew down

² John vi. 32.

³ John iv. 14.

⁴ Numb. xx. 11.

⁵ John i. 10.

⁶ John x. 47. This is Chrysostom’s interpretation of *the Rock that followed them*.

⁷ Supernatural, and nourishing the soul together with the body.—Theoph.

additional “indignation and wrath” upon those who enjoyed them, when obedience was withheld.

5. *But with many of them God was not well pleased ; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*

6. *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

7. *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them ; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

8. *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*

9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

10. *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

11. *Now all these things happened unto them for examples ; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

What, then, were the different sins into which the Israelites had fallen, and left an example to others ?

First, they had been dissatisfied with what God permitted them. They said, “Who shall give us flesh to eat, as we did eat in Egypt freely? but now our soul is dried away : there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.”⁸ Let the Corinthians beware of their idol-feasts, and the meats they lusted after : if by partaking of them they wounded the conscience and injured the soul of a weak brother, they too might displease the Lord, and kindle his anger against them. Even innocent desires and things indifferent become *evil*

⁸ Numb. xi. 4—6.

things, when they are sought in despite of the will of God.

Further, the Israelites became idolaters: gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, “Up, make us gods which shall go before us:—and they offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and *the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play:*⁹ joined in the revelry which made a part of idolatrous worship. Could, then, the Corinthians safely “sit at meat in the idol’s temple?”¹ Would not the Lord visit them also, as he had visited the Israelites for their sins?²

Other evils had found a place in their church, which they must carefully put away from them.³ The Israelites joined themselves to Baal-Peor: and the daughters of the Moabites and of the Midianites were a snare to them:⁴ and there was a plague in the congregation, by which *fell in one day three and twenty thousand*, besides a thousand slain by the sword. The Israelites, again, complained of their tedious journeyings, their wants and privations: so murmured, as to provoke the Lord to jealousy: *tempted Christ*, as doubting his power to save: and were *destroyed of the destroyer*: “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and much people of Israel died.”⁵

Now all these things happened unto them for examples: have left a proof to the people of God in all ages, that God, whilst he shows “mercy unto thousands in them that love his commandments;”—

⁹ Exod. xxxii. 1—7.

¹ See chap. viii. 10.

² Exod. xxxii. 34.

³ Refer to chapter v.

⁴ Numb xxv. 1—6.

⁵ Numb. xxi. 5

is yet “a jealous God,” and will not give his glory to another: is a “consuming fire” to presumptuous offenders. Murmuring, discontent, licentiousness, the setting up idols in the place of God, are the sins of one age as much as of another: and we, *upon whom the ends of the world are come*,⁶ read these histories for our admonition, “lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”⁷ We may justly be thankful for the privileges granted us. To be devoted to God from our earliest days: to be baptized, not *unto Moses*, but unto one greater than Moses: to have the offer of *spiritual meat and spiritual drink* for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls: all these are grounds of rejoicing. But the purpose of all religious privilege, is obedience; what God requires, is “the keeping the commandments:” and this is what the heart is least inclined to, and will struggle hard to escape from; so as to make its very privileges a pretext for exemption. It will be satisfied with an ordinance or a name: and examine itself not by the inward grace but the outward sign. Therefore, what has happened in former times, must be our example of what will also happen in time to come. If the idolaters, and murmurers, and licentious revellers “that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy;” *were destroyed of the destroyer*: “of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of

⁶ i. e., who live under the latter dispensation.

⁷ Heb. iv. 11.

grace?"⁸ Wherefore let him "that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

LECTURE LXXII.

ON TEMPTATIONS.

1 COR. X. 12, 13.

12. *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

This was said to the Corinthians. From the warnings and reproofs which they incurred, we have seen that it was a needful caution: for they were full of presumption and confidence.

The caution may be as justly given to all who inherit our fallen nature. Confidence is not made for man. The Lord allowed Peter to learn this by experience of his weakness.¹ In his ardour, he had desired to come unto him on the water: "but when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and began to sink." And yet his was a laudable exercise of faith. How much greater the danger, if we depend upon ourselves, and *think we stand!* If we ever dare to "say that we are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."² the Lord will soon leave us to perceive that we are "miserable, and blind,

⁸ Heb. x. 28.

¹ Matt. xiv. 28—31.

² Rev. iii. 17.

and poor, and naked :" and that those only are preserved unto the end, who feel their weakness, and seek their sufficiency from him who is alone able to " keep them from falling," and supply the strength they need.

13. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

St. Paul allows here, that temptation *is common to man*: i. e. that man is born to it, and must expect it. He does not tell the Corinthians that they were free from temptation, but that they lay under no unusual temptation. The Lord Jesus had given this notice from the first. " He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."³ Things are not so ordered, that no temptation shall assail the Christian; but rather, that " we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."⁴

We further collect from these words, that to some of God's people are assigned temptations greater and more serious than common. Such temptations might have befallen the Corinthians; but had not. The temptation of Abraham was of this kind. It is represented as something unusual. The history says, " It came to pass that God did tempt Abraham:"⁵ tried his faith by a most unexpected demand; no less than that he should take the " child of promise," his only

³ Luke ix. 23.

⁴ Acts xiv. 22.

⁵ Gen. xxii. 1.

son Isaac whom he loved, and offer him upon the altar as a burnt-offering. When Abraham's faith was subjected to this severe trial, it could not be said that *no temptation had taken him but such as is common to man.* We might say the same in the case of Job, and of Daniel. But Paul, perhaps, was not thinking so much of them, as of the trials which were then endured by many Christians; "trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment."⁶ The Corinthians were tempted to engage in the idolatrous feasts to which their former habits had accustomed them, and which, on account of former habits, it required much self-denial to abandon. But it would have been a far greater trial to one who was in heart a servant of God, if he were obliged to join in an idolatrous feast. This temptation had not taken them, a temptation which, though not common to man in general, was not uncommon to Christians of that age, and of the ages which succeeded: when they were required to take part in sacrifices and join in worship, which was, in effect, a denial of the true God: when they were forced to make choice between torture and death, on the one side, and the forfeiture of their everlasting hopes, on the other. This temptation had not taken the Corinthians.

An assurance follows, which might afford comfort in the prospect of temptation. No temptation shall come upon you, but such as ye shall be able to bear: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also*

⁶ Heb. xi. 36.

make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
He who knows your frame, your nature, and your circumstances, will provide for the spiritual safety of his people, and will fit their burthen to their strength, and adapt their strength to their burthen.

The *way to escape*, here spoken of, does not mean a way to escape temptation itself, but to escape falling under temptation. It is not promised that God's people will be exempt from conflict, but that they shall be safe from injury. Not that they shall be exposed to no storms, but that their faith shall not suffer shipwreck. It is *escape* from battle or from storms, to return unharmed. No other escape is promised, than strength to resist temptation. No way was made for Daniel to avoid the severity of trial, when he was threatened with a cruel death unless he ceased from prayer. But strength was given him, that though he "knew the writing was signed" which was to compass his condemnation, "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."⁷ No way was made for Job to escape the endurance of sorrow and disease. But "in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."⁸ He was endued with patience, and made able to bear that weight of affliction, which has rendered him a pattern of resignation to the people of God in every age.

Admire here the wisdom of our heavenly Father, who provides for the salvation of his people in the way that seems good to him. He might, without doubt, have ordained that there should be no tempta-

⁷ Dan. vi. 10.

⁸ Job i. 22.

tion: no labours to weary, no pleasures to allure; no wicked to trouble from without, no passion to molest within. But it has pleased him to order otherwise. It has pleased him that they who are to wear the crown of glory hereafter, should first “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ:” that the husbandman should labour before he be “partaker of the fruits.”⁹ But still he provides that the trial which is to prove his people’s strength, shall not overcome it; that the furnace which is to refine, shall not destroy. “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings:”¹ so the Lord “watches over them that serve and fear him; guides, supports, comforts them; makes his strength perfect in their weakness; and proportions their power to the temptation, that *they may be able to bear it.* Therefore, “blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”²

LECTURE LXXIII.

IDOLATROUS FEASTS TO BE SHUNNED.

1 COR. X. 14—22.

14. *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*
15. *I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

St. Paul’s mind is still harassed by the habit prevailing amongst the Corinthians, of frequenting the

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 3—6.

¹ Deut. xxxii. 11.

² James i. 12.

feasts made in honour of the false deities, the “lords many and gods many” of the heathen. He represents the evil in a manner to convince their reason. I speak unto some, he says, who boast of their wisdom; who think themselves “wise unto salvation:” *judge ye what I say:* and see by the examples which I shall bring forward, how your partaking of these feasts, how the eating of the meats offered in the temples, may involve you in the sin of idolatry.

We, as well as the heathen, have a festival, the Supper of the Lord.

16. *The cup of blessing¹ which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

17. *For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*

We *being many*, a company of persons, eat of “that bread from heaven;” it unites us as *one body*, so that we seem to form *one bread*, one substance, even as the bread is one which we break, and of which *we are all partakers.²*

And we are thus united as the worshippers of Christ. This social and sacred feast joins us together, as depending upon him for redemption: it is *the communion of the blood of Christ*, which “cleanseth

¹ *Cup of blessing.* The cup for which we give thanks and bless God: εὐχαριστούντες ὅτι τῆς πλανῆς ἀπηλλαξε το των ἀνθρωπων γένος. *Chrys.*

² Because the bread is one, one *loaf* being broken for us all, we who partake of it, being many, are one body: owning ourselves thereby all members of that body of which Christ is the head.”—*Whitby after Chrysostom.*

from all sin ;” it is *the communion of the body of Christ,* “ bruised for our iniquities.”

After the same rule will the heathen judge of us, if they see us sitting at meat in the idol’s temple. When we drink the wine and break the bread in the company of the faithful, they know it to be an act of worship in honour of the Lord whom we call upon. And if they find you joining the banquets in the assembly of the heathen, will they not suppose that you worship with the heathen ? *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*

Another example may be taken from the sacrifices of the Jews.

18. *Behold Israel after the flesh : are not they which eat of the sacrifice partakers of the altar ?*

Consider the case of those who still remain *Israel after the flesh*, not being “led by the Spirit” to perceive that the law of Moses is set aside. Feasting makes a part of their worship also. Moses ordained (Levit. vii. 15) that “the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offerings for thanksgivings shall be eaten the same day that it is offered.” They that thus *eat of the sacrifices, are partakers of the altar* where they offer them ; worship the God, to whom the altar is consecrated.

So that both by Jews and Christians, to partake of the feast which is celebrated at public worship, is considered as making a part of worship, and connecting the worshipper with the God who is honoured by it. And *judge ye what I say*, when I warn you that ye cannot be present at feasts in honour of an

idol, and yet be free from the charge and danger of idolatry.

You will plead that *the idol is nothing*, and the sacrifice vain. The answer is, that the idol is to the Gentiles instead of God: and the sacrifice they pay, is the *sacrifice paid to devils* instead of Him to whom alone it is due. Be not ye partakers with them, but *flee from idolatry*, ye that have been brought “from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.”

19. *What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?*

20. *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*

21. *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.*

22. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?*

There are no idolatrous feasts to tempt us now. Yet St. Paul's argument supplies a needful warning.³ It shows the danger of being present at many of the scenes, and partaking of many of the amusements which are common in the world. To instance only one; the THEATRE. A person might argue, in the same strain as the Corinthians who excused their feasts:—I know that there is much wickedness connected with the theatre. I know that those who engage in it are exposed to more temptation than

³ It would condemn one who attended a Roman Catholic mass, for the sake of the music which may be enjoyed there.

is “common to man:” that those who attend it are often the ungodly and licentious: and that it is not a place where God is honoured, rather, where he is too commonly despised. But I am in no such peril. I carry my right principles thither, and I return unharmed, while my mind is gratified. The theatre is nothing: the company is nothing. I see the exercise of talent and genius. I see a representation of human life and manners.

Does not St. Paul’s reasoning apply? *I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice unto devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.* These amusements are not for the glory of God: they cannot promote his glory: but they do favour “the adversary:” they give him opportunity to corrupt the young and unwary, to weaken piety, to degrade religion, to keep eternity out of view. They *provoke the Lord to jealousy.* Would not a friend be jealous, who saw one that professed affection to him, sitting at the same table with his greatest enemy? Would not a sovereign be jealous, who knew that one engaged to his service joined willingly in the society of traitors, listened to their sentiments, and by his presence gave countenance to their proceedings?

It was a sign that much remained in the Corinthians which required a change, if they did not keep themselves as far as possible from that idolatry which they ought to have remembered with penitence and sorrow. And it will be sign of a heart still attached to “the world and the things that are in the world,” if we can find gratification in any engagements or

amusements which tend to dishonour Him “in whom our breath is, and whose are all our ways,” and whom we are bound “in all things to glorify through Jesus Christ.”⁴

LECTURE LXXIV.

CIRCUMSPECT BEHAVIOUR REQUIRED IN CHRISTIANS.

1 COR. X. 23—33.

23. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*

24. *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.*

In the christian life, nothing is little or unimportant. Every act and every purpose has a bearing upon eternity, and affects the welfare of our own soul or that of others. Therefore there are many things which are, strictly speaking, *lawful*—which break no commandment:—and yet very *inexpedient*, very contrary to christian wisdom or discretion: would injure, rather than *edify*. Perhaps they may be safe to ourselves, yet scandalise others. This too must be considered. *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's spiritual wealth.* It would be little satisfaction to a traveller that he could swim across a rapid stream, and reach the other side in safety, if by his example he had led his companion to plunge

⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 11.

in, and then saw him sink before his eyes. Through thy boldness or thy strength shall a weaker “brother perish ?”¹

Paul applies this to the point in hand, the partaking of meat which had been offered in sacrifice to idols.

25. *Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake :*

26. *For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*²

27. *If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.*

There is no occasion to make or cherish scruples. A tender conscience need not be a weak conscience. Meat that is offered to idols is still that food which God has provided for the use of man, and “created to be received with thanksgiving :”³ *for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*

28. *But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake : for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof :*⁴

29. *Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other : for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*⁴

30. *For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks ?*⁵

Should a man remark, *This is offered in sacrifice unto idols*; he evidently proves that he has a feeling on the

¹ See Ch. viii. 13. ² From Ps. xxiv. 1. ³ 1 Tim. iv. 3.

⁴ *Judged* : i. e. condemned. Chrysos. and Οecumenius.

⁵ Why should I give occasion to be evil spoken of? τι παραπλεναζεις σεαυτον βλασφημουσθαι, και δια σου την πιστιν και τον Θεον.—Οecumen.

subject. Perhaps he is a brother Christian. Then his feeling is, This has borne a share in the worship of an idol: it has been *sacrificed to devils*: “it is an accursed thing:” and those who eat of it, must share in the pollution. If he sees you partake of it whilst these are his sentiments, he sees you wilfully do what he believes to be displeasing to God. *Therefore, eat not for his sake who showed it, and for conscience' sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:* He has provided, and he will provide for the wants of all who trust in him.

But perhaps it may be a heathen who says, *This is offered in sacrifice unto idols.* He too is to be considered. He sees you eat of what he esteems sacred. Perhaps he says within himself: It appears that these Christians do not condemn our sacrifices: they partake of them as we do. Or perhaps he says: These Christians, who condemn our sacrifices, and condemn us as if we worshipped “vanities,” yet cannot refrain from the temptations of the feast. They eat what is offered to our idols. Again, then, there is reason to abstain, if not on account of *thine own conscience, of the other*: for why should you afford occasion for others to speak evil of you, even though God’s grace has set you at *liberty* in this matter, and enabled you to be a partaker and give thanks, if you could do so without wounding the conscience of another?

It is not without reason that these rules are left recorded for our instruction, “upon whom the ends of the world are come.” They teach the Christian how to act in cases which might otherwise perplex him. They teach him to avoid all those places and amusements which “are not of the Father, but of

the world :" and which minister to the " lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."⁶ From these he must absent himself *for conscience' sake*: *conscience, if not his own, of others*. If the careless person sees him present at such assemblies, he returns home thinking himself justified in frequenting them, since his more religious neighbour either sees no harm in them, or risks the harm for the sake of the gratification. The " weak brother," again, is encouraged by example: and further entangled in the error, from which he might have " clean escaped :" encouraged to " run into the same excess of riot " with others who make no pretence of regarding God. Thus the liberty of one, even if he might justly claim liberty in these things, becomes a snare and a cause of offence to others.

31. *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

32. *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:*

33. *Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

To advance *the glory of God*, is the purpose of the Christian. He is sent into the world to this end, that God may be glorified: that in the midst of a world which too generally " likes not to retain God in its knowledge," there may be those who remember him, serve him, and seek his eternal kingdom. Our Lord said to his disciples, " Ye are the salt of the earth,"⁷ to preserve it from corruption. " Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine

⁶ 1 John ii. 16.

⁷ Matt. v. 13—16.

before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Therefore, in things which might of themselves appear indifferent, or in which others use liberty, one who desires to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,"⁸ will be self-denying and circumspect, that he *give none offence, neither to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*: not pleasing himself, or *seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved*. This was Elisha's mind, when he refused the presents which Naaman would have persuaded him to receive. "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants?" Shall we, the prophets of the Lord, show that these things have charms for us, and that we are even as others?⁹ This also was the mind of Daniel, when at the court of the heathen king, he purposed in his heart not to "defile himself" by living as the heathen lived:¹ he must show himself to be of a different race from those who were ignorant of the true God, and whose maxim was to take their fill of the only world they knew of, or were looking to. And thus God is glorified: when his fear is seen to prevail, and when his commands are made effectual to turn aside present temptation: and men are brought to acknowledge what Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged, when he "answered Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings."²

⁸ Rom. xii. 2.

⁹ 2 Kings v. 26.

¹ Dan. i. 8—16.

² Dan. ii. 47.

LECTURE LXXV.

DIRECTIONS CONCERNING PUBLIC WORSHIP.

1 COR. xi. 1—16.

1. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.¹*
2. *Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.*
3. *But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*
4. *Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.*

To understand this, we must place ourselves in the country where Paul was writing; and bear in mind, that the head veiled or covered, was then a token of subjection, of inferiority. It had remained so from very early times. For we read in Genesis, that when Rebecca saw Isaac approaching, and “the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.”²

Should a man then *pray or prophesy* in the christian assemblies, *having his head covered*, he would be assuming the place of the woman: he would do that which was seemly in her, but unseemly in him, be-

¹ This verse properly belongs to the subject of the foregoing chapter, and should have concluded it.

² Gen. xxiv. 64, 65.

cause unsuitable to his sex or station: and so doing, he would *dishonour his Head* who is above: act unworthily towards Christ himself, who is *the Head* of the church, and therefore *of every man* belonging to the church: just as God the Father is the *Head of Christ* his beloved Son: and just as man is *the head* of his inferior helpmate, *woman*.

On the contrary, it was disgraceful for a woman to appear with the head uncovered: (the women of that country were, and still are, always veiled;) so much so, that the apostle says, to have the head uncovered in any public place would be as great a *dishonour* to a woman, as much a reproach to all connected with her, and her husband especially, as if she were *shorn or shaven*. For they only were shorn or shaven, whom it was intended to make an object of disgrace and ignominy.

But it seems that among the ordinances which had not been duly kept in the Corinthian church, was one relating to this custom. Women who were led by spiritual impulse to pray or prophesy in the assemblies, had neglected the usage of the country, and *prayed or prophesied with the head uncovered*. Paul forbids this, as unbecoming: as disturbing the providential order of things, which made man the head of the woman, and the woman subordinate to her husband. If the woman assumed to herself that token of superiority which belonged to the man, she did what was inconsistent with her first creation: for the man was not taken from the woman, *but the woman from the man.*³ And it was contrary to the original purpose, according to which *the man was*

³ Gen. ii. 21, 22.

not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. God said : “ It is not good that the man should be alone : I will make him an help meet for him.”⁴ And it was afterwards declared, “ Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”⁵

All this was reversed, if the woman took to herself the liberty of throwing aside the veil.

5. *But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head :⁶ for that is even all one as if she were shaven.*

6. *For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn : but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.*

7. *For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God :⁷ but the woman is the glory of the man.*

8. *For the man is not of the woman ; but the woman of the man.*

9. *Neither was the man created for the woman ; but the woman for the man.*

10. *For this cause ought the woman to have power⁸ on her head, because of the angels.*

Scripture does not give us much information concerning the angels. But it speaks of them as “ ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto such as shall be heirs of salvation.”⁹ Therefore they must watch over and witness all we do : and the services of the church, important as they are to our spiritual state,

⁴ Gen. ii. 18.

⁵ Gen. iii. 16.

⁶ Her husband : the man who is intended to be head over her.

⁷ Gen. i. 26.

⁸ Gen. ii. 18—22.—i. e. a covering : “ a sign that she is under the power of her husband.” Marginal translation.

⁹ Heb. i. 14.

must receive their especial attention. If then there were any one who neither regarded the rebuke of the apostle, or reverenced her husband, let her reverence the angels.¹ Solomon, in like manner, takes an argument from the presence of angels when he dissuades from rash and hasty words.² “Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin ; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error : wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands ?”

Having corrected this disorder, Paul checks himself, lest he should seem to have done injustice to the woman, and spoken disparagingly of her sex. For in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female:³ there is no inequality in the sight of God ; though for order’s sake, and the general well-being, one is in subjection to the other.

11. *Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.*

12. *For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.*

13. *Judge in yourselves : is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?*

14. *Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?*

15. *But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her ; for her hair is given her for a covering.*

16. *But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*

¹ Chrysostom and Theodoret : “angels having man under their guidance.” He quotes Acts xii. 15, and Matt. xviii. 10. Others have supposed that by ἀρχεῖοι, “the chief ministers of the church” are intended : as Revel. i. 20.

² Eccles. v. 6.

³ Gal. iii. 28.

Should any one still contend and dispute, and justify this disorderly conduct, let him know that he will oppose the general practice of Christians : *we have no such custom, neither the churches of God anywhere.*

The apostle had good reason for prohibiting everything which might tend to distract the mind, and divert it from the proper object of public worship. A woman praying in the church *uncovered* must have this effect among persons brought up as the Corinthians were, to reckon a veil an essential part of female dress, and who had never seen it laid aside except by persons the very opposite from what a christian female ought to be : or perhaps by those heathen priestesses who departed from national custom on purpose to attract attention, or on pretence of inspiration.

And here we may ourselves derive a profitable lesson from what appears peculiar to that day.

Under the best circumstances, it is hard to escape distraction ; hard to preserve that frame of mind which becomes the sanctuary. Most carefully, therefore, should we avoid all cause of offence : and when we enter into the house of God, guard our appearance from anything that might resemble levity, or excite vanity. We may not have the consciousness, which in those times was familiar, of the presence of angels in the public assemblies. But we never doubt of the presence of Him, before whom the angels vail their faces.⁴ And if in every place, still more especially in the house of God, the “adorning should not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of

⁴ See Isa. vi. 2.

wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel:⁵ but the hidden man of the heart," bowed in reverence before the Lord of the temple: the meekness of spirit within should be signified by outward humility and modesty: so that we neither offend ourselves, nor give occasion that others offend.

LECTURE LXXVI.

ERRORS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 COR. xi. 17—26.

17. *Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.*

18. *For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.*

19. *For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*

Paul was not surprised that these things should be. What he knew of the practices which existed amongst the Corinthians, as well as of our common nature, led him at least *partly to believe* what he had heard. He knew how the Lord had said, "It must needs be that offences come."¹ Such *divisions* or *heresies* separate the wheat from the chaff. *They who are approved*

⁵ 1 Pet. iii. 3.

¹ Matt. xviii. 7.

are made manifest. God sets before his people the way in which they should go: and permits Satan to open a path to the right hand or to the left, which they will follow if they yield to their own hearts; which they will avoid if they are obedient to God's word. Moses warns the Israelites (Deut. xiii. 1—3) that there might “arise among them a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, who should give a sign or a wonder, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them. Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” And now, when the Corinthians found their church distracted by parties and heresies, they should look upon it as a temptation: the Lord their God was proving them, that they who could not be perverted might *be made manifest.*

But not only was this to be blamed, but they had other practices which brought reproach on the most sacred ordinance of their religion. They treated the *Lord's supper* as an ordinary meal; each taking his own provisions to the common assembly: so that some were insufficiently supplied, and others had too much abundance. With habits such as these, of division on the one hand, and irreverence on the other, there could be no piety, and therefore no blessing. They *came together*, indeed, and so showed that they were a company who acknowledged and worshipped the Lord Jesus: but they *came together not for the better, but for the worse*, as far as concerned their souls.

20. *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.*

21. *For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

22. *What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*

23. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:*

24. *And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken² for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

This bread which I break and give you, is the emblem of my body, bruised, and pierced, and broken on the cross: the cross on which I bear your sins, and the “sins of the whole world.” “for the Lord hath laid on one the iniquity of all.” Therefore *do this in remembrance of me.* Ye have seen me take bread, and break it, and give to each a portion: do this same thing: and when ye do it, let it remind you, that as the bread is broken, so the body of Christ was broken: and as the bread is eaten, so the crucified body of Christ must be fed upon: and as the bread nourishes, so the crucified body of Christ, relied upon and trusted in, nourishes the soul, and supplies it with fresh life and strength.

This was to *eat the Lord's supper:* this was the purpose of its institution: a purpose entirely frustrated by the habits which they had been indulging.

² Matt. xxvi. 26, Mark xiv. 22, Luke xxii. 19, who, however, writes *given* for you, where Paul says, *broken* for you.

25. *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

26. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

An old testament or covenant had been given to the Israelites by Moses. He set forth the will of God concerning them ; prescribed them laws and ordinances ; and pronounced, that it should be “their righteousness, if they observed to do all these commandments before the Lord God, as he had commanded them.”³ A new testament or covenant is now established, of which *this cup*, this wine, is the emblem. For the wine is *my blood* : my blood shed for the remission of sins : and the covenant is, that whoever trusts in that blood, as shed for his sins, as being instead of his own blood,—his sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more.

So that doing this—keeping this memorial—we *show the Lord's death till he come*. We *show*, or tell it forth ; we celebrate it : praising God for the inestimable blessing, and at the same time bearing testimony before men of the faith we profess. The Lord's Supper is a perpetual memorial of what Christians believe, as well as of the fact on which that faith is grounded. When the Israelites passed over Jordan, the waters making way for them,⁴ Joshua commanded that twelve stones should be taken from the bed of the river, and pitched in Gilgal. “ And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones ? Then

³ Deut. vi. 25.

⁴ Josh. iv. 20—24.

ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land." The Lord's Supper is a like memorial. And if any shall ask, What mean ye by this service? The answer is, We who observe it, are trusting for our eternal life to that death which we thus commemorate; trusting also, that He whom we worship, and whom his disciples saw taken up into heaven, shall so come "again in like manner,"⁵ and receive unto himself all them that have believed in his name.⁶ Thus *we show the Lord's death till he come*. But not as the passage of Jordan was shown, in one spot only, where the twelve stones had been first pitched. The communion of the body and blood of Christ is at once a perpetual and an universal memorial: celebrated in every age since Jesus died, and established in every country under heaven where a company of Christians is found. In the North and the South, in the East and in the West, amongst the most civilized and the least civilized of mankind, the same act of faith is performed and the same confession made: "O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving: most humbly beseeching thee to grant, that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion."⁷

⁵ Acts i. 11.

⁶ John xiv. 2, 3.

⁷ Communion Service.

LECTURE LXXVII.

THE NATURE OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS.

1 COR. xi. 27—34.

27. *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

28. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

29. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation¹ to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

The Corinthians partook of what they called “the Supper of the Lord.” But as they celebrated it, it deserved no such name: it was a mere man’s feast: and whoever should so *unworthily eat this bread, and drink this cup*, became *guilty of the body and blood of their Lord*: guilty of the charge of profaning it.

And so now—though no one could profane the table of the Lord in the same manner, they might attend it no less *unworthily* :—if without repentance; if without self-consecration; if without reliance on him whom the feast commemorates,—they should come to that holy sacrament.

But let a man examine himself; inquire of his own conscience, whether he is really showing the Lord's

¹ Condemnation, or judgment. The word *damnation* bore this sense, when the translation of the Scriptures was made.

death, and so answering the purpose which the ordinance was intended to fulfil. He is not showing the Lord's death, if he communicates in compliance with custom, without thought or meaning: if the cup, of which he drinks, does not remind him, that it flows from that fountain in which he is to be cleansed from sin: if the bread which he eats does not remind him, that the body of Christ “is meat indeed,”² giving life to those who feed upon it inwardly, and apply it by faith to their souls. To communicate otherwise, is to *eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body*: making no distinction between the bread which nourishes the outward man, and the spiritual “bread which came down from heaven,” that “a man may eat thereof, and live for ever.”³ So to eat, would “profit nothing:” rather, it would be so to eat and drink, as to bring down condemnation on ourselves. Nay, it had already brought its evil consequences on the Corinthians.

30. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

31. *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

32. *But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

33. *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.*

34. *And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

Here St. Paul discloses, in part, the course of God's

² John vi. 55.

³ John vi. 58.

dealings with his people. *For this cause*—because of the unworthy manner in which you have treated this holy ordinance, the evils which you suffer have come upon you. It is with you as with the Israelites of old : to whom God gave his promise, that if they kept his laws, the Lord would take from them all sickness, and put none of the evil diseases of Egypt upon them:⁴ but if they rebelled and were disobedient, he would bring upon them all the diseases of Egypt, and they should cleave unto them.⁵ So now among the Corinthians; many, who might have been strong and in health, were *weak and sickly*; and many slept : many had been taken prematurely to the grave.

It was a reason, why every man should *examine himself*. *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* If, like the inhabitants of Nineveh, we should “turn every one from his evil way ;—who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”⁶

Still, if we *are judged*, it is in faithfulness. It is a sign that God is merciful, and has not cast us off. Sweet waters may flow from a bitter fountain. *When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* For “whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.”⁷ “As many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens.”⁸ “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up ; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.”⁹ “Surely it is meet to be said unto

⁴ Deut. vii. 12—15.

⁵ Deut. xxviii. 60.

⁶ Jonah iii. 8—10.

⁷ Heb. xii. 6.

⁸ Rev. iii. 19.

⁹ Job v. 17, 18.

God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”¹ It was thus with the prodigal, when he left his father’s house, and “went into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living.” There came a famine in the land, and he was reduced to the lowest misery. It brought him “to himself.” It determined him to say, “I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned.”² If no misfortune had befallen him, and he had been allowed to persevere in his course of vanity and revelry, it must have ended in his destruction: he must have perished for ever.

The Old Testament abounds with examples of judgments, i. e. of temporary affliction visiting the children of God, that they might *not be condemned with the world*. It was so with Moses and Aaron, when the Lord spake unto them, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel,—therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”³ It was so with David, to whom Nathan said,⁴ “The Lord hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that is born unto thee shall surely die.”

These were chastened of the Lord, that they might “not be given over unto death.” It is when his visitations are neglected and despised, that the severity of his anger must be expected; “a fearful looking

¹ Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

² Luke xv. 13—18.

³ Numb. xx. 12.

⁴ 2 Sam. xii. 13.

for of judgment and fiery indignation.” As the prophet Jeremiah complains⁵—“ O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved ; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction : they have made their faces harder than a rock ; they have refused to return.” Amos writes to the same purpose ;⁶—“ I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your palaces : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have withholden the rain from you : I have smitten you with blasting and mildew ; I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt : I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” “ Therefore, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” If ye “ receive not correction ;” if “ ye will revolt more and more ;” and refuse to *judge yourselves* when ye are *chastened of the Lord* : ye must be included in the condemnation, and await the doom of “ the world that lieth in wickedness.”⁷

“ Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and withhold pride from man. He is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain : Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him : and he shall see his face with joy. He will

⁵ Ch. v. 3.

⁶ Ch. iv. 6—11.

⁷ Zeph. iii. 2 ; Jer. vii. 28 ; Isa. i. 5.

deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light.”⁸

LECTURE LXXVIII.

THE TRUE TEST OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

1 COR. xii. 1—3.

1. *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*

2. *Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

There have always been pretenders to *spiritual gifts*: and the Corinthians were in danger of being corrupted by such pretenders. They must not “believe every spirit: but try the spirits, whether they be of God.”¹ There was a test by which they might be proved: the real prophet known, and the false prophet discovered. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the mighty change which had taken place in them: how they that “were sometime darkness, were now light in the Lord:” had been brought to the knowledge of “the living and true God,” instead of being *carried away unto these dumb idols, even as they were led.* They had come to this state of salvation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ: and might be sure that whatever did not tend to exalt

⁸ See Job xxxiii. 14—29.

¹ 1 John iv. 1.

and honour Him, could not be a *spiritual gift*, or proceed from God. Perhaps some of the priests of those *dumb idols*, whose craft was failing, took what seemed to them the best means of maintaining their own interest: and pretended to speak under inspiration, whilst they decried the authority of Jesus. Besides these, there were unconverted Jews, “making their boast of God,” whose worshippers they had always been, yet indulging the most vehement enmity against Jesus, as if he had “destroyed the law and the prophets.” These would speak of him as justly put to death: as having been rightly condemned to an *accursed* death,² as a blasphemer, who “by their law ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”³ Nay, there had been a time when even Paul might have *called Jesus accursed*, and yet “verily have thought within himself” that he was speaking in accordance with the Spirit of God.⁴

This, therefore, was the test to which they might look, the sign on which they might depend. “Hereby they might know the Spirit of God.” No man, whatever might be his claim to *spiritual gifts*, must be believed or trusted, who could speak lightly, much less who could speak blasphemously of Jesus Christ.

3. *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

As St. John wrote afterwards, having the same

² Gal. iii. 13.

³ John xix. 7.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 9.

truth to maintain, and the same errors to combat,⁵ “ Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

It seems an easy and simple thing, to confess that “ Jesus Christ is come in the flesh;” *that Jesus is the Lord*: and yet how much is implied in those short words! *Jesus is the Lord*. Then Jesus is he, “ of whom Moses and the prophets did speak;” whom the Jewish nation had been long expecting, to “ redeem Israel;” whom, nevertheless, they rejected, and would not “ have to reign over them;” and at length they “ crucified that same Jesus, whom God made both Lord and Christ.”⁶

Jesus is the Lord. Then the whole race of mankind were needing a Redeemer: till he came to “ seek and to save that which was lost,” and to “ give his life a ransom for many;” whom God has attested as “ his beloved Son,” in that “ he hath raised him from the dead,” and sent him “ to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins.”⁷

Jesus is the Lord. Therefore let every knee bow to him, and every tongue confess him: “ God hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”⁸

⁵ 1 John iv. 2, 3, 7.

⁶ Acts ii. 36.

⁷ Acts v. 31.

⁸ John v. 22, 23.

Jesus is the Lord. And whosoever “ heareth his sayings, and doeth them,” shall never perish, but is heir to everlasting glory.⁹

It was no less, indeed it was much more than this, to *say that Jesus is the Lord.* And therefore Paul says, that no man can declare or teach this truth, *but by the Holy Ghost.* He proclaimed it first, in fulfilment of the promise which Christ had made on the day of Pentecost.¹ And ever since He has put it into the hearts of faithful men to proclaim, that “ God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son : so that he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.”²

No doubt these truths may be spoken in words, and even taught, without the Spirit’s influence. A man may *say that Jesus is the Lord*, because others around him say it, and inquire no farther: and such doctrine may be taught because the Church teaches it, and we repeat the Church’s creed with our lips, while in our hearts we know and feel nothing of its meaning. But if from the heart we *say that Jesus is the Lord*: and not only *the Lord*, but *our Lord*: the Lord whom we are bound to serve, the lawgiver whose commands we are to follow, the prophet who is to show us real wisdom: such language is “ taught of God.” For wherever this is acknowledged, and made the rule of action; that is accomplished which Jesus came to effect: the heart is turned from worldly vanities to serve “ the living and true God;” the affections are taken from things below, and raised to things of heaven. And this conversion of the heart is

⁹ Matt. vii. 24.

¹ Acts ii. 33.

² 1 John v. 11, 12.

the work of the Holy Ghost; who thus performs the office which is peculiarly his own:³ he shows that we are by nature at enmity with God, and need to be reconciled to him: and then he shows that Jesus is that Reconciler, that Mediator, who “is the propitiation for our sin,” and “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”⁴ To recognise this, is to “receive” *Jesus as the Lord*. And they who do thus “receive him, are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”⁵ So Simon was assured, when he made his “good confession, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”⁶ *For no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

Great is indeed the blessedness, when this truth is imprinted on the heart. One who has received it, does “not abide in darkness:” he has a light to walk by, a lamp to direct his steps, and “guide his feet into the way of peace.” Even when he goes down into the valley of the shadow of death, there is still one with him to support and comfort him. And he need fear no evil; for he who is thus with him, and sustains him, is “his Lord and his God.”⁷

³ See John xvi. 7—11. ⁴ Heb. v. 9. ⁵ John i. 13.

⁶ Matt. xvi. 16, 17. ⁷ See Ps. xxiii. 4, and John xx. 28.

LECTURE LXXIX.

THE VARIOUS GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

1 COR. xii. 4—11.

4. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*
5. *And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.*
6. *And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*
7. *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.¹*

St. Paul had before given one general rule, by which a teacher who spoke by the Spirit of God might be discerned, and distinguished from any false pretenders. A man speaking by the Spirit of God would acknowledge Jesus as the Lord, and teach in his name.

But there was great difference in the spiritual gifts of those who agreed alike in laying this foundation, and were employed in building up the church of God. *The same Spirit wrought in all; but with a diversity of gifts, and administrations, and operations.* The members of the human body are numerous, because the purposes to be served are numerous; but are all directed by one principle within. So it is likewise in the christian body: so it was especially in the early church, whose circumstances required

¹ προς το συμφερον, to use for the general good.

diversities of gifts, and differences of administrations, and diversities of operations: and in consequence the members and ministers of the church were endued with a variety of qualifications, *given to every man to profit withal:* “divided to every man severally,” in order that he might exercise them for the common good in the sphere of duty assigned him.

8. *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*

9. *To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*

10. *To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.*

11. *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.²*

To one is given by the Spirit *the word of wisdom.* Such as was manifested by James, when he presided over the council at Jerusalem, and satisfied the apostles and elders that they among the Gentiles who had turned to God should not be compelled to conform to the law of Moses.³ Such also as was exercised by Barnabas, when being sent down from Jerusalem to judge concerning the unexpected progress of the Gospel at Antioch, he perceived the work to be of God, confirmed the disciples in the faith, and “exhorted them that with full purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord.”⁴

² Chrysostom allows that it was difficult, even in his time, to assign the exact meaning to the different gifts here enumerated: because, he says, “we are ignorant of the facts to which the apostle refers, which used then to take place, and do not happen now.”

³ Acts xv. 13—22.

⁴ Acts xi. 22—24.

To another is given by the same Spirit *the word of knowledge*. In this Apollos excelled: who was remarkable for his acquaintance with the Scriptures,⁵ and therefore capable of alleging proofs and answering objections: so that he “mighty convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing from the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”⁶

To another, *faith*, which is common to all, and is the basis of all their energies, is given in a pre-eminent degree. Faith, like that which encouraged Peter to descend from the ship into the sea; but which does not fail, as with him on that occasion, though the winds are boisterous.⁷ Of such faith St. Paul’s whole history is an example. It enabled him to “count not his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy:” it enabled him to “go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that should befall him there: save that the Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions “awaited him.”⁸ It enabled Peter and John to proclaim Jesus as the Lord, whom the Jews, his hearers, “by wicked hands had crucified and slain,”⁹ and to declare in the presence of the council, that whatever might betide them, “they could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard.”¹

Another is remarkable for the gifts of healing. It was by this power that Peter and John attracted to themselves first the wonder and then the admiration of the people. They said to the cripple at the gate

⁵ Acts xviii. 24.

⁶ Acts xviii. 28.

⁷ Matt. xiv. 28—31.

⁸ Acts xx. 22—24.

⁹ Acts ii. 23.

¹ Acts iv. 20.

of the temple, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee:² In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.” And, afterwards, “they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.”³

The working of miracles of various kinds was given to others, in accordance with that promise of the Lord, who said to his apostles, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils:⁴ and again assured them, after his resurrection, “These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”⁵

Another was entrusted with the power of *prophecy*. As Agabus, who foretold “the great dearth throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.”⁶ And afterwards, at Cæsarea, “when he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”⁷

² Acts iii. 2—8.

³ Acts v. 15.

⁴ Matt. x. 8.

⁵ Mark xvi. 17, 18.

⁶ Acts xi. 28.

⁷ Acts xxi. 11.

To another was given *the discerning of spirits*; skill to discern what was in the heart; to know its real motives. Thus Peter was enabled to understand the character of Ananias, and to unveil the hypocrisy which lay concealed under his pretence of generosity.⁸ This was a great and signal occasion: but the power of discerning characters was especially important then, when one treacherous or ignorant man, one false teacher, might ruin a whole church. “Lay hands suddenly on no man,”⁹ was Paul’s command to Timothy: be careful to discern, whether the Spirit of God or the spirit of the world actuates him.

Others were enabled to *interpret the tongues* of different nations, or to declare the works of God in *divers kinds of tongues*. As is related of some disciples of John, who were taught the way of God more perfectly, at Ephesus, and “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”¹ “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.” Like the company at the house of Cornelius, who astonished Peter and his Jewish attendants, when “they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”²

These were the various gifts bestowed by that *one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*. A purpose was to be served by them all; a great object attained. The kingdom of Christ was to be established in the world. “The

⁸ Acts v. 1—5.

⁹ 1 Tim. v. 22.

¹ Acts xix. 2—6.

² Acts x. 46.

grace of God which bringeth salvation was to appear unto all men.”³

A great purpose is still to be effected. Those are to become partakers of that grace, and brought into that kingdom, who would otherwise be lying in darkness under the power of Satan. And for this end various qualifications are still needful; and must still proceed from the *same God which worketh all in all*. There are still *diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*. *And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord*. He distributes his gifts: to one, *wisdom*; depth of thought and judgment. To another, *knowledge*; the acquirements of learning: to another those high degrees of *faith*, by which the missionary is led to “hazard his life for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴ Another is endued with that kind of *prophecy*, which interprets the Scriptures according to the mind of Him who dictated them: another has *the discerning of spirits*; the power of reading the characters of men, and perceiving their proper qualities and dispositions.

And *these manifestations of the Spirit are given to every one to profit withal*. God divides to every man, according to his own will, and man’s ability.⁵ And in the end he will command the souls to be called to him, that he may know how much every man hath gained by trading with the talents delivered to him.⁶ And “unto every one that hath, shall be given.” Every man, in whose hands the Spirit hath been made *to profit*, whether in little or in much;

³ Tit. ii. 11.

⁴ Acts xv. 26.

⁵ Matt. xxv. 45.

⁶ Luke xix. 15.

shall receive according as his work shall have been. “Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.”⁷ And blessed is that good and faithful servant, who having “received five talents, shall come and bring other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.”⁸

LECTURE LXXX.

THE DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH ARE WORTHY OF THE SAME ESTEEM.

1 COR. xii. 12—26.

12. *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

13. *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Here the Christian Church is described by a figure. It is compared to the human body; which, being *one, hath many members*, and though consisting of various parts, is still *one body*. *So also is Christ:* so is the church of which Christ is the head, and which because he is its head is called by his name. It comprises many parts, separate in themselves and unlike one another: but the same soul animates

⁷ Ch. iii. 8.

⁸ Matt. xxv. 20.

them all, and they are united in the same service though performing different offices. The *Jews and Gentiles*, for instance, in themselves differ widely : the *bondmen and the freemen* in civil life, are divided by a marked boundary ; but when they become members of the church of Christ, being baptized in his name, the Spirit, the same Spirit, influencing them all, unites them *into one body* ; and they *are made to drink into one Spirit*, while they drink the blood of their common Lord, with whom “there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”¹ The reflection that “he died for all,” levels all differences, and brings them all to one mind and one desire, how they may best agree in living to him, who died for them.

14. *For the body is not one member, but many.*
15. *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body : is it therefore not of the body ?*
16. *And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body ; is it therefore not of the body ?*
17. *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing ? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling ?*
18. *But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*
19. *And if they were all one member, where were the body ?*
20. *But now are they many members, yet but one body.*
21. *And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee : nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.*

What is here said of the body, with its many limbs

¹ Gal. iii. 28.

and different senses, is equally true concerning the church with its many different members.

In the body, one sense may seem to be more useful, or one member more honourable than another. But all are necessary to the well-being or completeness of the body. The eye may be thought more important than the ear, or the hearing than the smelling; but if either is absent, the body is imperfect and defective. So it is in the church of Christ: so it was especially in the early church, when all who belonged to it appear to have had some employment, to have fulfilled some service for the common good: when, besides apostles, and pastors or teachers, some were rulers, and others helps and fellow workers, and others judges of controversies, and others ministered to the necessitous.

Some of these were in more honourable stations than their brethren. And if their charity were not perfect, (and when is it perfect in our corrupt nature?) envyings, and murmurings, and variance might arise. Against this Paul is guarding. Where all the several employments were equally requisite for the general good, there must be no complainings, and no comparisons. *The eye must not say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.*

Indeed it might happen that some of those offices which were in least honour, or were most laborious, might be amongst the most useful. In this respect, again, the church may bear resemblance to the natural body. We bestow the most abundant honour on the parts which we think less honourable. The face, on which the image of God is particularly

stamped, we leave uncovered : whilst on other parts of the body we *bestow more abundant honour* ; and endeavour not only to cover them, but to adorn them by their covering.²

22. *Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary :*

23. *And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour ; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.*

24. *For our comely parts have no need : but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked :*

25. *That there should be no schism in the body ; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

26. *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

In this way Paul would encourage them to judge of the different offices in the church. Some of these carried with them precedence and distinction. The elders who presided in their assemblies, others who prophesied, or spoke with tongues, might be considered as possessing the most excellent gifts ; and a *schism in the body* might ensue, one party coveting what was enjoyed by another.

Therefore he reminds them, that as in the body, so in the church, *those members which seem to be more feeble, are necessary* : and on those offices which they thought to be less honourable, God *might bestow more abundant honour*. The teacher, for instance, who patiently expounded the word of God in private, might obtain a blessing not granted to the favourite

² Doddridge in loco.

preacher ; the one might gratify the intellect, or attract the multitude, whilst the other became the instrument through which grace reached the heart, and the simple were enlightened with “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.” Indeed we have an example in Paul’s own history, of the way in which *God tempers the body together, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked.* The assembly which he had summoned to meet him at Miletus gave him that return of reverence and affection which he deserved, when as he was taking his departure for Rome, “all wept sore, and fell on his neck, and kissed him : sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.”³ But there was a humble disciple at Joppa, who bore a very different part among the members of the church, as ministering to the necessities of the poorer brethren ; being “full of good works, and almsdeeds which she did.”⁴ What comparison could there be between Dorcas and the chief apostle ? And yet *God so tempered the body together,* that when Dorcas fell sick and died, another apostle was witness to a scene scarcely less honourable than that at Miletus. “When Peter was come, they brought him into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made whilst she was with them.”

But whatever may be the case regarding present or worldly honour, there is sufficient reason why there should be *no schism in the body, but that all the members should have the same care one for another.* Each

³ Acts xx. 37.

⁴ Acts ix. 36—41.

holds the place which God has assigned him. *God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him.*⁵

In every calling and condition, i. e. generally throughout human life in all its ranks and duties, there will always be opportunity of discontent, because there will always be inequality. The eye will always be tempted to say to the hand, *I have no need of thee*, and again *the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* Therefore there must be an abiding remedy against a continual danger. That remedy, is to bear in mind that God has apportioned to each man his station *as it pleased him*: “dividing to every man severally as he will.” Very distinguished is the place which even the meanest and lowest of the community is holding, when considered as assigned by the King of heaven, and as being a place in his service, and assured of his reward. The lowest place which is so assigned and so rewarded, is higher than the greatest and wisest of men could dare to claim. Therefore “let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”⁶

⁵ See Rom. xii. 4, 5.

⁶ Phil. ii. 3.

LECTURE LXXXI.

UNION OF VARIOUS OFFICES IN THE SERVICE OF
THE CHURCH.

1 COR. xii. 27—31.

27. *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

The whole church is the *body of Christ*. So is that multitude termed “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, which no man can number.”¹ He has been pleased to style himself, its head;² because he presides, he governs, he provides for the general good, as the head directs the members of the body. Still more, he is interested, as the head, in the welfare of the body, and of each particular member; he rejoices when they are prosperous, in their affliction he is afflicted.

When Paul himself, under his first name and character of Saul, was proceeding to Damascus with the authority of the high priest, that “haling men and women,” he might cast them into prison at Jerusalem:³ they were members of Christ whom he was using thus despitefully: they were *members in particular* of the body of which he is head. And therefore, when in mercy his career was stopped, he heard a voice from heaven saying, “Saul, Saul, why perse-

¹ Rev. vii. 9.

² Eph. i. 22. Col. i. 18; ii. 19.

³ Acts ix. 1—5.

cutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Inasmuch as thou doest an injury unto one of the least of these my members, thou doest it unto me. The head suffers when the members suffer.

And, again, service is done to the head, as it is here Paul's purpose to show, when the members, each in their order, perform their several functions, according as God has assigned to every man his place and duty.

28. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

These were all different instruments, employed of God for the building up of his church; "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."⁴

The *apostles* directed the whole; as Paul intimates, Acts xv. 36, saying to Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of God, and see how they do." "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

Secondly, there were *prophets*, inspired from time to time to declare what it was expedient should be foreknown; as Agabus, or the four daughters of the evangelist Philip at Cæsarea.⁵

Thirdly, teachers were set over special congregations, to build them up in the faith, and feed them with the "sincere milk of the word."

After that, miracles were performed by some:

⁴ Eph. iv. 12.

⁵ Acts xxi. 8—10.

others *healed* diseases ; others were *helps*⁶ or assistants of the poor ; others had *governments* ; the affairs and charities of the church were placed under their management ; like the deacons who were early appointed, that none might be “neglected in the daily ministrations.”⁷ Others had *diversities of tongues*, as those on whom Paul laid hands at Ephesus, and the Holy Ghost came on them ; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.”⁸

These all performed different offices, and were endued with different qualifications. They had neither the same duties nor the same rewards. Some were obscure, and others widely known. Some had a life of greater ease, and others of heavier labour. Some were in frequent peril, and others comparatively safe. The services of some were acknowledged by popular applause and favour. Others laboured in secret, distinguished by him alone “who seeth in secret.” Yet the church could spare none of them. The lowest member was as needful as the highest, that the body might be “perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” It was natural that all should desire to have the foremost or the most enviable station : but all could not have it, if the general welfare was to be sustained.

29. *Are all apostles ? are all prophets ? are all teachers ? are all workers of miracles ?*

30. *Have all the gifts of healing ? do all speak with tongues ? do all interpret ?*

31. *But covet earnestly the best gifts. And yet shew I you a more excellent way.*

⁶ ἀντιληψεις.

⁷ Acts vi. 1—6.

⁸ Acts xix. 6.

They might *covet*,⁹ i. e. greatly desire, *the best gifts*. Against this there was no law. They could possess no gift except it came to them from above; and they might innocently desire that God should count them worthy of the highest honour. Without contending, like the apostles on one occasion, “who should be the greatest:”¹ they might be thankful for any power bestowed on them which made them better able to promote the glory of God. But there was a still *more excellent way*, which he was about to show them; a way which the lowest in the christian church might follow, and in which the highest in the church must walk, or all his gifts, ordinary or extraordinary, would be of no value.

Paul thus prepares them for the further instruction he had to give, on a matter no less needful than the regulation of the church; namely, the regulation of their own minds; the keeping them in that frame, which should resemble Him, who was “meek and lowly in heart;” whose character it was that he did not “strive, neither did any man hear his voice in the streets;” he did not “quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed.”² This spirit of humility and charity was sadly wanting among the Corinthians. Yet what would it profit a man, if he were followed by the applause of thousands, or ruled over a whole province, and “lost his own soul?” What would he gain by preaching to others, if he himself were to “be a castaway?”³ If “he has not kept his own vineyard,” what would he gain by being “made keeper of the vineyards?”⁴

⁹ Ζηλούτε.

¹ Mark. ix. 34.

² Matt. xii. 18.

³ Ch. ix. 27.

⁴ Cant. i. 6.

To every man the care of his own eternal welfare is the thing of chief importance. And those who are raised highest in their vocation, and to whom, together with the greatest honours, the weightiest concerns of this world are entrusted, are they who have most constant need to retire into themselves, and inquire whether whilst they uphold the religion of Christ, they are also endued with “the mind of Christ,” without which they are “none of his.”⁵

LECTURE LXXXII.

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHARITY.

1 Cor. xiii. 1—7.

1. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

2. *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

Because these gifts are bestowed for the purpose of showing men the way of salvation. But they do not of themselves take the person who is endued with them along that way. He must be even careful that they do not make the way more difficult to him, by spoiling his temper or injuring his humility. It is one gift of the Spirit, to possess *the tongues of*

⁵ Rom. viii. 9.

men and of angels, or the power of *prophecy*, or the *understanding of mysteries*, or the exercise of *faith*. It is a different gift of the Spirit, to possess brotherly love or *charity*. And charity is needful for ourselves, whilst languages, and prophesyings, and miracles, are only profitable to others.

And so it is possible that a man might, through a spirit of rivalry or pride, sacrifice all he had, even life itself: and yet be without that pure, peaceable, holy, humble temper, which is alone of real value in the sight of God.

3. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

These seem extreme examples. Yet it is clear that Ananias, in *bestowing his goods to feed the poor*,¹ had not as his principal object either the love of God or man. And if the three youthful Jews at the court of Nebuchadnezzar had *given their bodies to be burned*,² out of obstinacy rather than piety, they would have done no more than the world has seen examples of, and human nature has been known to achieve.

What then is this CHARITY, this benevolence of heart, without which whatever else a man is, *he is nothing*: whatever works he performs, *it profiteth him nothing*?

4. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

¹ Acts v. 1, 2.

² Dan. iii. 16—18.

5. *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

6. *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

7. *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

Charity suffereth long, and is kind. There was no such spirit in the unmerciful servant, who had himself been “much forgiven;”³ yet threw his fellow servant into prison, who owed him an hundred pence. Whereas the Lord has said, (Luke xvii. 3,) “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.”

Charity envieth not : does not repine at the success or welfare of another : does not resemble Haman at the court of the king of Persia,⁴ who acknowledged that all his own prosperity availed him nothing, so long as his adversary Mordecai had a share with him of the royal favour. This evil must be rooted out of our nature ; that it is deeply seated there, may be often perceived even at the earliest age.

Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly. It is not rashly insolent ; it is not conceited ; it is not overbearing. These too common faults are altogether contrary to brotherly affection, and arise, in fact, from self-love. Men are haughty, and puffed up with a high opinion of themselves : they are proud of their possessions, or their talents, or their qualities ; and therefore they *vaunt themselves and behave unseemly.* They are angry, if another differs from them ; why, but because they

³ Matt. xviii. 24, &c.

⁴ Esther v. 11—13.

are confident that no other can be right? They are displeased if another blame their conduct; why, but because they cannot brook the being thought wrong? High and low, rich and poor, must equally guard against these faults; those in an inferior station, giving honour where honour is due;⁵ those who are higher, "condescending to men of low estate;" and all "submitting themselves one to another in the fear of God."⁶

Charity seeketh not her own. One of the greatest victories of the gospel, is that it overcomes self. No doubt, there is a time to claim our own, as well as to resign it. The world is kept together by that principle which leads men to study their own ease, and honour, and profit. Religion does not forbid this; our state on earth makes it necessary. But religion does forbid us to seek either ease, or profit, or advantage of any kind at the expense of a neighbour's right or benefit: it tells us where to stop in seeking our own good: it tells us never to go beyond justice; never to conceal or deny the truth; never to push a claim too far: nay, even to sacrifice what we might rightly expect, rather than irritate or injure another. This is *charity*. And if this mind be in us, it is "the mind that was in Christ Jesus: who when he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich."⁷

Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. This, too, is part of that brotherly love which the

⁵ Rom. xiii. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 13, &c.

⁶ Eph. v. 21.

⁷ Phil. ii. 5. 2 Cor. viii. 9.

gospel teaches. Those with whom we are engaged are men like ourselves, frail and prone to error. Hence offences will come. Our duty is, to bear offences mildly; not to be *easily provoked*, as if we had ourselves no fault, or could expect others to be faultless. And when the case is doubtful, to *think no evil*; to judge favourably: not like the Pharisees, who condemned the Lord Jesus, because he healed diseases on the Sabbath day.⁸ Many things which seem to deserve blame, might appear in a different light, if we knew the motives of the doer.

The very contrary to this, is the too frequent habit of *rejoicing*, not *in truth* or righteousness, but *in iniquity*: feeling a secret satisfaction, when another, especially one above us, or one of a different party, has been betrayed into error. How unlike true love towards a brother! which weeps as he weeps, rejoices as he rejoices, falls as he falls, rises as he rises.

Charity *beareth*, or rather, *covereth*,⁹ *all things*: for love will “hide a multitude of sins,”¹ instead of blazoning them abroad, like him who rejoiceth in iniquity.

Charity *believeth all things*: believes every thing which may make for the credit or advantage of another, and is slow to admit what may injure his good name.

Charity *hopeth all things*: hopes even “against hope,” that circumstances are better than they seem.

Charity *endureth all things*: prays for the persecutor and despotic; turns away wrath “by a soft an-

⁸ John ix. 16, &c.

⁹ As Sirach, viii. 17. στεγει λογον.

¹ James v. 20—from Prov. x. 12.

sver;"² "is not overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good."

Such is a general description of that brotherly love, which is greater than any outward qualifications, and without which no outward qualifications can avail. It is the temper which we are bound to cultivate, and by which we must examine our spiritual condition, and judge concerning ourselves. No doubt, there is much of a contrary temper in the world: much of envy, much of pride, much of selfishness, much of malice, many resentments and bitter animosities. But these are not feelings belonging to the Christian, or which the Christian can indulge. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."³

Still, we may well rejoice that we are not to look upon this, or any other christian grace, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God. Who would venture his salvation on his freedom from all envy, selfishness, wrath, or other uncharitable temper, even for a single day? Alas! "In many things we all offend:"⁴ all fall very short of what perfect charity requires. Every work of self-examination must also be a work of repentance; and must send us, as it were, afresh, to claim our interest in Him, "whose blood cleanseth from all sin," and who "ever liveth to make intercession" for his faithful though unworthy followers.

² Prov. xv. 5. Rom. xii. 21.

³ 1 John ii. 9; iii. 14.

⁴ James iii. 2.

LECTURE LXXXIII.

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

1 COR. xiii. 8—13.

8. *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

9. *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.*

10. *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

There is a further reason, beside those before mentioned, *why charity* is far above all outward gifts or qualifications. *It never faileth:* it is a quality engrafted on the soul by the Holy Spirit, and will abide with it for ever, no otherwise changed than in being “made perfect.” Whereas, *whether there be prophecies, they shall fail: whether there be tongues, they shall cease: whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.* Tongues, or prophecies, may be compared to a language which is spoken in the country where a man now is, but will be no longer needed when he leaves it. Charity is an universal language; not only spoken here on earth, but in heaven also; the possession of it, is like the possessing that which all ages and all countries have agreed in reckoning valuable; so that he who has such a treasure, will everywhere be rich. Such is the difference between charity, and those outward gifts which the

Corinthians too highly prized. *Prophecies*, and *tongues*, and *knowledge*, edify the church on earth; they instruct, they convince, they build up in the faith those who are here to be made “wise unto salvation.” But, for that very reason, they are only needful for a time. They who “shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead,”¹ and “are as the angels of God in heaven,” they will no longer need the *prophecy* which is to explain God’s counsels, or the *tongues* which are to make them known. *When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* The glimmering ray of knowledge which we can now attain will lose its value, being eclipsed by the full and unclouded light of heaven; just as the morning star vanishes away before the brightness of the sun when it is risen. It will not be so with that brotherly love which has sprung up in the soul together with prophecy and knowledge. *Prophecies shall fail, and tongues shall cease*, whilst the *charity* which they have aided to produce remains, and flourishes for ever in the genial climate which the soul is to inhabit hereafter.

In making this contrast between christian love, and outward qualifications, St. Paul delicately warns the Corinthians of their errors and their danger. Much in their conduct had been very contrary to love and charity. Meanwhile they had prided themselves in their spiritual gifts, and thought highly of their knowledge. The apostle reminds them of the imperfection of that knowledge. The knowledge of the wisest man, as to the Allmighty,

¹ Luke xx. 35.

his counsels, or his attributes, is but the knowledge of a child ; and will so appear, *when that which is perfect is come.*

11. *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

12. *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

13. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

This brings us to a further proof of the excellence of *charity*. It had been before shown to be superior to tongues and prophecies. But it is also superior to *faith* and *hope*. Faith and hope are very different from tongues and prophecies. They were soon to fail and cease, and not to be revived; the need of them would be over in the church: whereas faith and hope can never fail on earth, or the church itself must fail with them. To the end of time, faith must not cease, or hope vanish away. *Now abideth faith, hope, charity. These three unite together, and form the christian character.*

The faith of which Paul here speaks, is that which is described in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews: that faith by which we lay hold of the promises of God revealed in his word; that faith which is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”² That faith is the Christian’s breath: it gives him life, new life, as a child of God: it gives him vigour, to behave as one of God’s family, and be

² Heb. xi. 1.

active in his service; if that faith were to cease whilst he remains here below, his life as a Christian would expire, and he would “return again to his dust.”

And if *faith* is needful that the Christian may live, hope is needful that he may be supported and animated in life; and thus enabled to meet his labours and his trials, as he “works out his salvation in the world.” Paul even says, elsewhere, “We are saved by hope;”³ we never should have perseverance to hold on our way, if we had not *hope* to sustain and encourage us. He also calls it “the anchor of the soul;”⁴ the anchor fixed upon the eternal world, which keeps the soul at rest amidst the storms of temptation, and stedfast and secure through all the adverse winds which threaten to divert it from its onward course, and wreck it among the rocks and quicksands of this present world.

Therefore *now abideth faith and hope*. But the time will come when faith and hope will have performed their office. They will have brought the vessel into “the haven where it would be;” and the sails, by which it has been borne along, may be taken down, and the anchor by which it has been kept secure, may be laid aside. The things believed in, will be things seen; and things hoped for, will be things possessed and enjoyed. No need of faith, where there is no doubt or uncertainty; no need of hope, where all is “fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.”

But it is not thus with CHARITY. *Charity never faileth.* It now abideth with faith and hope: but it

³ Rom. viii. 24.

⁴ Heb. vi. 19.

is greater than these, because it will abide, when faith and hope are done away. It is, in truth, that quality which faith and hope are to contribute towards producing: that quality which proves the renewal of the soul through “sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” And having been here, as in an elementary state, formed, and nourished, and exercised, it accompanies the soul to those regions where all is love: it is admitted into the presence of God; and “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”⁵

Examples show these things most plainly: and the first martyr, Stephen, is well fitted to illustrate Paul’s meaning. Stephen was full of faith, and full of hope: and, animated by faith and hope, he so keenly reproved the high-priest and his council, that they “cast him out of the city, and stoned him.”⁶ “But he, looking stedfastly up to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.”

Faith, then, and hope, were now ceasing: Stephen beheld the Saviour, in whom before he had believed; saw the glory of God of which he was immediately to partake; and the hope which had thus far encouraged him, was now realised. But his last words were words of CHARITY. “He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” His body returned to the earth; and “his

⁵ 1 John iv. 16.

⁶ Acts vii. 54—60.

spirit to God who gave it.”⁷ And with the spirit, the charity by which it was filled and animated. Had his departing soul been inflamed with wrath and hatred, like that of his enemies, it would have ascended to God a malicious and angry soul. But it did ascend to God as a loving and forgiving soul ; and that is the frame in which heaven must be entered, and heaven must be enjoyed. “Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy.” “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”⁸

And, therefore, though we “have all faith, that we could remove mountains,” and “full assurance of hope,” that God hath chosen us for his own, if “we have not charity, we are nothing.” We have not that spirit which marks the children of God. We have not that spirit which “accompanies salvation,” and belongs to the kingdom of heaven.⁹

LECTURE LXXXIV.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS MUST BE USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF INSTRUCTION.

1 COR. xiv. 1—12.

1. *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*

⁷ Eccles. xii. 7.

⁸ Matt. v. 7. 1 John iv. 7—12.

⁹ See 1 John iii. 14.

It was an astonishing thing which the multitude assembled at Jerusalem witnessed on the day of Pentecost.¹ “And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What is this?”

We cannot wonder if some of the disciples were elated to whom a portion of this new power was granted; and if they were fond of displaying it even where there was not the same occasion, as when it was used by the apostles.

St. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the design of all *spiritual gifts*: not for personal display, but for the glory of God in the edification of his people. *Desire spiritual gifts; but rather that ye may prophesy*: that is, explain the word or the will of God as revealed by his Spirit: making your speech “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

2. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God:² for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

¹ Acts ii. 1—14.

² Because though he himself understands what he says, he does not render it to others, unless he interprets, as ver. 5.—Chrys.

3. *But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*

4. *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.*

5. *I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

They that hear, may take a lesson from this passage, as well as those that speak. The speaker is to give *edification, and exhortation, and comfort.* The hearer must be equally ready to receive *edifying.* No words can profit, if they merely fall upon the ear, and are not marked and inwardly digested. As the preacher who does not *interpret* his meaning is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal: so the hearer who does not apply the truths and precepts taught him, is like “the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.”³

Here, however, St. Paul’s concern is with the Corinthian teachers, who made an unprofitable use of the gifts bestowed on them.

6. *Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?*

7. *And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?*

8. *For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?*

³ Ps. lviii. 4.

9. *So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.*

10. *There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.*

11. *Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.*

12. *Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*

Musical sounds have been used in all ages to excite certain ideas. There are sounds suited to joy, and sounds suited to sorrow. Sounds which rouse the passions, and sounds which compose and tranquillize them. Sounds which animate the soldier to advance against the enemy, and sounds which warn him to retreat. So that it passed into a proverb against those who paid no attention to what was *piped or harped*, “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.”⁴ But if the persons who send forth these sounds, *give no distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is intended by them?* If they who “take the tabret and the pipe”⁵ do not issue notes of cheerfulness, who would be induced to dance? If the mourning women at a funeral did not utter notes of wailing, who would be excited to weep?⁶ If the trumpet gave not the note which the soldier knew to be the signal for arms, *who would prepare himself for the battle?*

Just such is the sound which is uttered by one who

⁴ Matt. xi. 17.

⁵ See Job xxi. 11.

⁶ Jerem. ix. 18.

undertakes to teach, but does not *utter by the tongue words easy to be understood*. *He speaks into the air*. He is to them who hear a *barbarian*: a foreigner: they *know not the meaning of the voice*.

Any teacher commits the same error, and deserves the same reproof, who does not speak to the *edifying of the church*. Words and arguments may be employed, which shall be to the hearer no better than *an unknown tongue*. And one who thus misuses his opportunities, cannot be said even, like the speakers among the Corinthians, to *edify himself*. They *in the spirit speaking mysteries* might obtain spiritual advancement from a sense of the power possessed by them. But he, making truth obscure, and darkening the counsels of God by words hard to be understood, edifies no one, whilst he frustrates the gracious design that the Gospel should be preached to the poor. They can neither rejoice with him, when he invites them to rejoice in the glad tidings of the gospel; nor can they mourn with him, when he exhorts them to lament over their sins. They *know not the meaning of the voice, and he is a barbarian unto them*. He addresses them in a foreign language.

Such is the case if the speaker's **LANGUAGE** is not clear and simple, such as "may be understood of the people." And the fault is the same, and the consequence the same, if the **DOCTRINE** be not clear: if he does not show the way of salvation with all plainness of speech, but *gives an uncertain sound*, perplexing the hearer rather than instructing him. In the "word of faith, which Paul preached," there was no uncertain sound. "If thou shalt confess with thy

mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”⁷

LECTURE LXXXV.

THE NECESSITY OF SPEAKING TO EDIFICATION.

1 COR. xiv. 13—25.

13. *Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.*¹

14. *For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.*²

15. *What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*

16. *Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned³ say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?*

⁷ Rom. x. 9, 10.

¹ Pray that the gift may be bestowed on him not only of praying, but of interpreting his prayer so as to be understood by the assembly. Chrys. and Theod.

² My spirit or mind prayeth, but my meaning profits no one else: *edifieth not.*—Ecumen.

³ Who is in the place of a layman or private believer: ὁ λόιωτης.

17. *For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.*

18. *I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:*

19. *Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*

20. *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.*

They would act as *children in understanding*, if they allowed their usefulness to be hindered by ostentation and a love of vain display. Children are pleased to show their glittering toys: and the gift of languages was but a glittering toy, unless it was employed to an useful purpose; unless it served the purpose for which they assembled themselves together. That purpose was prayer and praise and edification, whilst all were united in one feeling towards God. Therefore Paul commands that he who prayed, whilst he *prayed with the spirit*, whilst his heart dictated what he said, should also *pray with the understanding*; not unfruitfully, using *an unknown tongue*, else, how could others be partakers of the prayer? And how show that they joined in the praises and thanksgivings by *saying Amen* to them, if they understood not what the speaker uttered? This, it seems, was the custom: as it had been with the Jews: for we read in the book of Nehemiah (viii. 4—6,) that “Ezra, standing upon a pulpit of wood, opened the book of the law in the sight of all the people, and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands, and they bowed

their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground."

But what, if Ezra had spoken in the language of Babylon? He might have shown himself to be above other men in learning, but he would have proved himself to be a *child in understanding*.

We need not go beyond "the law and the prophets," to be taught the object for which the gift of tongues is intended: namely, not for the admiration of believers, but for the conviction of unbelievers: for *a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not*.

21. *In the law it is written,⁴ With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.*

22. *Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.*

23. *If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?*

24. *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:⁵*

25. *And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

⁴ Isa. xxviii. 11. "With stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people:—yet they would not hear." The apostle has accommodated these words of the prophet to his own argument.

⁵ ὑπὸ πάντων. The secrets of his heart are brought forward and shown unto all.—Chrys.

A stranger, *one unlearned* in the faith, might enter the assembly of christian worshippers. No doubt he often did so. How important it was that he should receive a just impression! If all who spoke, spoke *in unknown tongues*, would *he not say that they were mad?* The people of Jerusalem said the same of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and for the same reason; “some mocking said, These men are filled with new wine.”⁶ But those thought very differently, who understood the languages with which they were endowed, and heard them “speak every man in his own tongue the wonderful works of God.” It wrought conviction, that *God was in them of a truth.* And so might the unbelievers be convinced, if all *prophesied:* declared and enforced from the Scriptures the will of God. Had Paul, when brought before Felix,⁷ made a display of the various tongues in which he was able to express himself—*more, as he affirms, than they all,*—Felix would have wondered at his faculty, but no effect would have been produced upon his mind and conscience; and if he had long continued in that strain, he might have justly thought, as Festus on another occasion thought unreasonably, “Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad.”⁸ But when Paul, in the language with which Felix was familiar, *prophesied* “of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come,” the result was very different: truth so spoken found an entrance to the conscience of Felix, and *the secrets of his heart were made manifest, to himself by his inward compunction, to others*

⁶ Acts ii. 1—13.

⁷ Acts xxiv. 25.

⁸ Acts xxvi. 24.

by his outward “trembling :” *he was convinced of all, he was judged of all.* It would have been well, if his conviction had been followed by conversion : if *falling down on his face he had worshipped God,* and prayed that his sins which were many might be forgiven. Such was the case, no doubt, with others : and so “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”⁹ The word of God, expounded by the christian teachers in these meetings, proved “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”¹ One who had experienced this would communicate his experience to others ; would *report that God was of a truth* in the christian assemblies ; and like the Samaritan woman, would say to his friends and neighbours, Come, hear a teacher “which told me all things that ever I did.”² Thus “the word of God would grow mightily and prevail.” A great number would be brought to “believe, and turn unto the Lord.”³

But none of these blessed results could take place, unless the teacher *spoke with understanding.* For *ten thousand words in an unknown tongue* would profit nothing. The hearer would not *be edified.*

We see, then, the point on which St. Paul so forcibly insists. It is, that all things should be done to edification ; that whoever ministered in the congregation should keep the great end of the ministry in view, namely, the glory of God, in the salvation of man. God is not glorified, because men are

⁹ Acts ii. 47.

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

² See John iv. 29.

³ Acts xi. 21.

not edified, if a preacher “strives about words to no profit;” occupies his time in “foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions:”⁴ entertains his hearers with “vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called:”⁵ for these “are unprofitable and vain:” for neither if we hear them, are we the better; nor if we hear them not, are we the worse. But God is glorified, when the word preached lays open to each man the secrets of his conscience, and so brings the “sinner” to “cleanse his hands,” and the “double minded” to “purify their hearts.”⁶ “The grace of God” then effects what it was designed to effect: and men are taught to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”⁷ “These things are good and profitable unto men.”

⁴ Tit. iii. 9.

⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

⁶ James iv. 8.

⁷ Tit. ii. 11—14.

LECTURE LXXXVI.

ORDER TO BE OBSERVED IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.

1 COR. xiv. 26—40.

26. *How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*

27. *If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.*

28. *But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.*

29. *Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.¹*

30. *If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.*

31. *For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*

32. *And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*

33. *For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*

Regular order had not yet been established in the assemblies at Corinth. The apostle requires them to observe it. Each man might contribute his gift to

¹ *διακρίνετωσαν*: discern and determine whether the prophesying is according to the word: “try the spirits.”—Chrys. Compare ch. xii. 10, “discerning of spirits.”

the common good. *When they come together, one hath a psalm, another hath a doctrine, another hath a tongue, another a revelation, or an interpretation.* Let each bring forward that which was in his heart: but so that *all things be done unto edifying.* Let them speak *by course,* let them prophesy *one by one.* Otherwise what could ensue but disturbance and contention? And should any plead, that he spake under divine influence, let him know that *the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.* “Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:”² but they never violated order and decorum. They so spake that *all might learn, and all be comforted.* No one could plead the inspiration of God for anything which produced disturbance or confusion. *For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace;* and nothing that doth not lead to peace can proceed from him or be agreeable to his will.

The evils which St. Paul corrects throughout this chapter prove the need of a regular and settled order by which public worship shall be conducted. In no other way would it answer its purpose. Pious men might express their thoughts as the warmth of their feelings dictated; but their thoughts, instead of being in harmony with the feelings of others, might jar against them; and the end be not *peace* but *confusion.* Let the man whose “heart is hot within him,” in whom “the fire kindles,” *speak to himself and to God:* but let him *keep silence in the church:* let him “pour out his soul before the Lord” in secret prayer. Like the mother of Samuel at Shiloh.³ She was “in bitterness of soul:” her spirit

² 2 Pet. i. 21.

³ 1 Sam. i. 15.

was greatly excited: yet it *was subject* to her understanding, “she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.” And the Lord, who seeth in secret, and knoweth what is in the heart, granted her the petition which she asked of him.

The women of Corinth were not so discreet as the Jewish matron. The apostle is under the necessity of restraining them.

34. *Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*⁴

35. *And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*

Such was to be the general rule and usage. The women were to *keep silence in the churches*. That they should speak in the assembly, or assume the office of regular teachers, would be contrary to the subordination designed for women. They would be “usurping authority over the man,”⁵ instead of *being under obedience, as saith the law*.

The only exception, was the case of “a woman praying or prophesying” under the direct inspiration of God, a gift which, like other gifts of the same kind, was soon to be withdrawn.⁶ That some should be

⁴ Gen. iii. 16. Numb. xxx. 8, 11, 13.

⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 12.

⁶ I see no other way of reconciling this passage with ch. xi. 3—13. And on these grounds we can understand how Chrysostom and the other early commentators saw no contradiction between the directions there given, *how a woman should pray or prophesy*, and the injunction here, that she should *keep silence altogether*.

so inspired in that early age, was part of the prediction fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. “It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.”⁷ This was fulfilled in the case of Anna, who, on the presentation of the Lord Jesus in the temple, “spake of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”⁸ And we are also told of the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, upon whom, as upon Miriam and Deborah of old, the Spirit of the Lord was poured out, and they “did prophesy.”⁹

These, however, like other extraordinary gifts, would soon pass away: and it would remain a general rule, that women should not be *permitted to speak in the church*, but “learn in silence with all subjection.”¹

The Corinthians, as we have seen, were very disorderly. Yet they were self-willed; and had a high opinion of themselves. Paul is obliged to remind them, that he did not owe the word of God to them, but they to him. They were not apostles to him, but he to them.

36. *What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?*

37. *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*

⁷ Acts ii. 16—18.

⁹ Acts xxi. 9.

⁸ Luke ii. 36.

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 12.

38. *But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.²*
39. *Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*
40. *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

By all means let them *covet to prophesy*. It was a precious gift, to instruct the mind or influence the affections of others, according as God might deal to every man the measure of knowledge or ability. *Speaking with tongues* was not to be forbidden. They were not so to interpret anything that had been said. It could only be done as “the Spirit gave them utterance;” though they might value it too highly, if they esteemed that gift above prophesying, or permitted it to atone for the want of charity.

But whether they spoke, or sung, or prayed, or prophesied, let them remember in whose special presence they were, and in whose honour they were assembled. As it had been said of old, (Eccl. v. 1, 2,) “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth. Therefore let thy words be few.” And “*let all things be done decently and in order.*”

² If a man choose to be obstinate, he must continue in his obstinacy. The apostle would not strive, or contend with such. In the same spirit as he had before written, “But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” xi. 16.

LECTURE LXXXVII.

THE CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

1 COR. xv. 1—11.

1. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;*

2. *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

Among their other errors, the Corinthians were in danger through false notions concerning the resurrection from the dead. They were Greeks: and to the Greeks, from the opinions prevailing amongst them, the resurrection of the body would appear “foolishness.” Even some who professed to be teachers corrupted the truth by vain philosophy, and affirmed “that the resurrection was past already:¹ that there was no other resurrection than a spiritual resurrection; a change in the soul here, no glorification of the body hereafter. Thus they “overthrew the faith of some.” St. Paul therefore saw it needful to set this great truth, the pillar of the christian faith, on a firm foundation.

3. *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;*

4. *And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:*

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 17.

5. *And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve :*

6. *After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.*

7. *After that, he was seen of James : then of all the apostles.*

They who denied that Christ had risen indeed, would be also likely to deny that he had really died. It was part of that philosophy which corrupted the early church, to oppose the doctrine that Christ had “come in the flesh” at all.² The first truth therefore to be maintained was, that *Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures* : according as the Scriptures had foretold ; declaring that he should “walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” though his soul should not be left in the place of the departed ;³—declaring, that he should be “cut off from the land of the living, and make his grave with the wicked, and be with the rich in his death ;”⁴—declaring that “Messiah should be cut off, though not for himself ;”⁵ that “the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of all.”

This Paul *delivered first, as he had also received ;* and then, *that he was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures* : the Scriptures which prophesied that “his body should not see corruption ;”⁶ that as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth :⁷ and left this “sign of the prophet

² See 1 John i. 1—3 ; and iv. 23.

³ Ps. xvi. 9, 10.

⁴ Is. liii. 8, 9.

⁵ Dan. ix. 26.

⁶ Ps. xvi. 10.

⁷ Matt. xii. 40.

Jonas," as a sign to condemn an evil and faithless generation.

But as this was the point upon which the whole of the religion of Christ must turn, it must be proved by fact, as well as revealed by prophecy. The efficacy of the death of Christ depended on his resurrection. It was therefore proved to the apostles and the disciples which belonged to their company, by evidence not to be mistaken—the evidence of their senses. During the space of forty days Jesus appeared continually to them, "in form and fashion as a man :" so that, as Peter records, they gave their testimony, "who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."⁸ Several of such occasions are mentioned here, which are not related by the Evangelists. And of the more than *five hundred brethren by whom he was seen at once*, (probably when he had appointed to meet the disciples in Galilee)⁹ *the greater part* were still alive and ready to attest what they had seen.

But amongst these, Paul was not one. The Lord had granted to him a separate revelation of himself, when he met him "in the way," and arrested his progress of persecution.¹

8. *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

9. *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

10. *But by the grace of God I am what I am : and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ; but I*

⁸ Acts x. 41.

⁹ Mark xvi. 7.

¹ Acts ix. 27.

laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul's sin, in opposing the religion of Jesus, had been long forgiven. But it was never forgotten by himself. He calls it to mind, and humbles himself as it were afresh by the recollection. *I am the least of all the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Many in like manner can look back upon the time, when if they did not oppose religion in others, they opposed it in their own hearts, and were slow to believe the words of eternal truth. The apostle shows us here the use that should be made of such retrospect. It is a ground of humiliation. *I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* As many might still say, I have no claim to the honourable title of Christian, because I neglected the obligations of my baptism.

The next reflection, will be one of thankfulness for that renewal of the mind, which has led to repentance and to faith. *By the grace of God I am what I am.* Those things, the "things which accompany salvation," once neglected by me, I now have learnt to prize and value. *By the grace of God* the light "hath shined in my heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."²

Another result follows the retrospect of past transgressions. It is an incentive to zeal, to more abundant labour "in the work of the Lord." *The grace*

² 2 Cor. iv. 6.

which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain : but I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Paul had not been “idle or unfruitful in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour.”³ If he had entered later than others into the field, none had been so constant in the work, both “in season and out of season :” none had made such extensive journeys : none had suffered so grievously both in mind and body : none had been blessed with so much success, or left in so many countries the proofs of his ministry ; the congregations of those who had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.”⁴

Did he then allow himself to be elated by these services ? He checks the first bud, which seemed as if it might open into pride :—of himself he could do nothing : *yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* And thus he shows us the living example of the apostle in the Christian, and of the Christian in the apostle.

11. *Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.*

It signifies little who laboured most : let God judge ; *whether it were I or they,* we are but instruments in the hands of God, to make known to the world the glad tidings of his mercy. *So, however, we preached, and so ye believed ;* this was the substance of our message, and the chief article of your faith, that *Christ died for our sins, and rose again from the dead.*

³ 2 Pet. i. 8.

⁴ 1 Thess. i. 9.

Touching the resurrection, therefore, there must be no doubt or uncertainty: your minds must not be “spoiled by philosophy or vain deceit.”⁵ It is only because “we believe that Jesus died and rose again,” that we believe that “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, and so we shall ever be with the Lord.”⁶

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

NECESSITY TO CHRISTIANS OF A RESURRECTION.

1 COR. xv. 12—19.

12. *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*

13. *But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:*

14. *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

To deny the resurrection of the Lord, was, in fact, to deny the main principle of the religion of Christ. Some among the Corinthians denied it, as a thing impossible. But if it was impossible in the case of Christ’s disciples, it was impossible in the case of Christ himself. The doctrine preached was that he became “very man,”¹ of the substance of his

⁵ Col. ii. 8.

⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 14—17.

¹ Athanas. Creed.

human mother. That as man he died and was buried. Now if it was impossible that his body should rise again, it was equally impossible that his disciples should be raised: and *then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain.* It rests on no foundation; and they will be disappointed of their hope who have renounced this present world, nay, who have “not counted their lives dear unto themselves,” that they may inherit an everlasting kingdom.

Then also the apostles had been deceivers. They had gone through all the world, declaring, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”²

15. *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.*

16. *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:*

17. *And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

18. *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

The opposers of the truth said, that the *dead rise not.* The same argument would prove that *Christ had not risen..* But on his resurrection all their faith and all their hopes depended. His resurrection proved the truth of his words, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up.” For “he spake of the temple of his body.”³ His resurrection was “the assurance which God had given to all men, that he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.”⁴ It was, as we

² Acts ii. 32; iv. 10; v. 32.

³ John ii. 19.

* See Acts xvii. 31.

may say, the seal which God had set to the truth of all his words. Take away that seal, his words would be unattested: nay more, they would be proved a vain pretension.

Worse followed. *Ye are yet in your sins.* No atonement has been accepted for them. That God accepted the sacrifice of Elijah, was proved by the fire which came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering with the wood on which it had been laid.⁵ If God had not given this answer to the prophet's prayer, there would have been no proof that Elijah had more of his favour than the priests of Baal. And so, that God accepted the sacrifice made by Jesus upon the cross, that his death was a propitiation for the sins of men, God for his sake “not imputing their trespasses unto them;”—this was proved by his rising from the dead. But if *Christ be not raised*, there is no longer any satisfaction for sin, “but a fearful looking for of judgment:” and *vain would be the faith* of those who trusted, that he was “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Then they had *perished* everlastingly, who had *fallen asleep in Christ*: who had died in peace, believing that they were “accepted in the Beloved.” Nay, those, too, who like Stephen or James had laid down their lives for the faith, “that they might receive a better resurrection;” all *had perished*. And truly not they only, the apostle proceeds to say, but we all who are now living in the faith of the Son of God, are just objects of pity, if we are to be disappointed of our hope.

⁵ 1 Kings xviii. 38.

19. *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*⁶

What will become of you, if there be no future life? So an infidel once mocked a faithful and self-denying Christian. He might have replied, though an unbeliever could not have comprehended the answer—"Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come."⁷ The truth is certain, that the man who lives most closely by the christian precepts, will be the happiest man, even in this present world.

The case was very different with those who, like many Christians in that day, were forced to submit to "the spoiling of their goods," the desertion of their friends, the loss of their means of living: nay, were often exposed to bonds and imprisonment, to torture and death. Surely, take away their everlasting life, *they were of all men most miserable.* St. Paul could look forward to all that awaited him with unshaken resolution, in order "that he might finish his course with joy."⁸ But *if the dead rise not*, where was his joy? It had been said, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."⁹ But *if the dead rise not*, there is no heaven, and no "recompence of reward."

St. Paul, therefore, might justly argue; *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* Above all, we apostles. Every Christian must deny himself, and take up his cross, and be prepared to suffer with his Lord.¹ But first

⁶ Properly, most *pitiable*, ἐλεεινοτάτοι.

⁷ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

⁸ Acts xx. 24.

⁹ Matt. v. 12.

¹ Matt. xvi. 24.

and chiefest, we apostles. If others have their privations and their trials, we have more: we who “have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as vile, that we may win Christ, and be found in him.”² We do not exhort others to make a sacrifice of things below, and set their affections on things above, whilst our own practice contradicts our preaching. All must acknowledge, that *if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.* Not because we have renounced whatever is sinful, and contrary to God’s law; for this is blessedness even now; and sin only, not righteousness, is miserable. But because we wander through the world, having no certain habitation; our life is passed in journeyings, in perils, in weariness, and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.³ We know not the things that may befall us, “save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide us.”⁴ Nevertheless we trust the promise; “Every man that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”⁵ “For he is faithful who hath promised, who also will do it.”⁶

² Phil. iii. 8.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 27.

⁴ Acts xx. 23.

⁵ Matt. xix. 29.

⁶ Heb. x. 23.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST DELIVERED UP TO THE FATHER.

1 COR. xv. 20—28.

20. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.*

21. *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

22. *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

23. *But every man in his own order : Christ the first-fruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*

We are told in the epistle to the Romans, that Adam was “the figure of him that was to come.”¹ Jesus Christ, who “was to come,” and the first man, Adam, were alike the authors of vast results to the world. By the first Adam “sin entered into the world, and death by sin :”² so that *in Adam all die*. By Christ, the second Adam, *shall all be made alive*. “I am the resurrection and the life,” saith the Lord: “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.”³ Thus *the resurrection of the dead came* by Christ as its author. The harvest is due to him, which “when the end cometh,” shall be gathered into the garner of the heavenly

¹ Rom. v. 14.

² Ib. 12.

³ John xi. 25, 26.

husbandman. And of that harvest for which he laboured, he is himself *the first-fruits*:⁴ his own body, raised from the grave in which it lay, and afterwards ascending up to heaven, is as it were “the sheaf waved before the Lord:” and like that sacred sheaf is a pledge of the whole harvest which is to follow. For it assures us that “the hour is coming, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth,”⁵ and shall “stand before the Son of man.”⁶

24. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*

25. *For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*

26. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

27. *For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.*

28. *And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

A great mystery is here touched upon, which we may attempt to illustrate by example.

Among the rich dominions of a mighty king, a province is in rebellion. The end of such rebellion, must be destruction.

This it is easy to figure to our minds. And it is

⁴ Levit. xxiii. 10. “When ye shall reap the harvest, ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you.”

⁵ John v. 29.

⁶ Luke xxi. 36.

the case of our world. As the prophet says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”⁷ “They are all together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one: there is no fear of God before their eyes.”⁸

But before judgment is inflicted, the King in mercy empowers his Son, his only Son, “his well beloved,” to offer terms of pardon. All who hear his voice, and commit themselves to him, shall be formed into a separate kingdom, be saved from “wrath and indignation,” and inherit everlasting life. “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”⁹ “All things are delivered unto him of the Father.”¹ “All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth.”² God “hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”³

Between this new kingdom of the Son, and the “power of darkness,” “the prince of this world,” the leader of God’s rebellious subjects, there is perpetual enmity and opposition. Satan, like “a strong man armed,” strives hard to maintain his power. In the end, his head is to be crushed: but meanwhile he sorely “bruises” all that contend against him.⁴ “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of

⁷ Isa. liii. 6.

⁸ See Rom. iii. 12—18.

⁹ John v. 22.

¹ Matt. xi. 27.

² Matt. xxviii. 18.

³ Eph. i. 22.

⁴ See Gen. iii. 15.

darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”⁵

But the Son *must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.* God hath *put all things under him.* The word has gone forth,⁶ “Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

And at length, when *all things are subdued unto him*, and he *hath put down all rule, and all authority and power*, when his kingdom is completed, and the “number of his elect made up,” and Satan, the deceiver, “cast into the lake of fire,”⁷ death itself shall be destroyed; *the last enemy that shall be subdued is death*:—for in the heavenly kingdom “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.”⁸

And now the Son’s commission is at an end. He has “glorified God on earth, and finished the work which was given him to do.”⁹ Therefore he *delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father.* For when “all power was given him, it is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him. So that resigning the office which for a special time and purpose he had held, *the Son shall also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*¹ No man now “knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the

⁵ Eph. vi. 12.

⁶ Psal. cx. 1.

⁷ Rev. xx. 10.

⁸ Rev. xxi. 4.

⁹ John xvii. 4.

¹ Chrysostom asks, “Why nothing here of the Holy Ghost?” And answers: Because Paul having one matter in hand, would not confound all things together.

Son shall reveal him.”² But then “ we shall know, even as also we are known :” it will then not be through a mediator only,³ that there is access to the Father: but *God will be all in all.* “ And his servants shall serve him : and they shall see his face ; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord God giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever.”⁴

This is the description of those *who are Christ's, at his coming.* It is not the description of all who shall rise again. Some “ shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt.”⁵ Some are “ without.” “ Into the city of the Lord there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”⁶

Who then will not pray, that he may “ die the death of the righteous ?” Who will not say, like Paul himself, “ I desire to be found having the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I, being made conformable unto his death,”⁷ may know him, and the power of his resurrection.

² Matt. xi. 27.

³ John xiv. 6.

⁴ Rev. xxii. 3—8.

⁵ Dan. xii. 2.

⁶ Rev. xxi. 27.

⁷ Phil. iii. 9—11.

LECTURE XC.

REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN THE RESURRECTION.

1 COR. xv. 29—34.

29. *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?*

The whole fabric of the Gospel rested upon the resurrection of the dead. Our Lord began his chief discourse by pronouncing those blessed, whose blessedness must depend in great measure upon a future world. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; for great is your reward in heaven.”¹ And he enforced his reproof of worldliness and covetousness by inquiring, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”²

This, therefore, was one of the truths which the Christians confessed at baptism. They were instructed to say, “I believe in the resurrection of the dead:” and in this faith they were baptized. *And what shall they do who are baptized for the dead,* baptized

¹ Matt. v. 3—11.

² Matt. xvi. 26.

in confidence of the rising of the dead, if in this they are deceived?"³

30. *And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?*

31. *I protest by your rejoicing⁴ which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.*

32. *If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus,⁵ what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.*

Such would be the natural conclusion, if we deny the resurrection. It is the language of those who believe their time is short, and desire to make the most of it, because they have no hope beyond. "Behold," as the prophet says, "behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."⁶

And yet, alas! how many live according to this sentiment, with less excuse, because they do not acknowledge the principle which leads to it! How many confess that they look for the resurrection of the dead and

³ Such is the interpretation of a much disputed passage in which all the early commentators concur, except Tertullian, who is refuted by Chrysostom. They see no difficulty in eliciting this meaning from the elliptical phrase, *ὑπερ νεκρῶν*, which, indeed, is not more elliptical than many of St. Paul's phrases.

⁴ *By your rejoicing*; i.e. by your spiritual advancement, which is my *rejoicing*.

⁵ To expose criminals to wild beasts was no unusual punishment. The earlier commentators suppose that St. Paul was so exposed at Ephesus, and preserved; though, because this is not recorded in the Acts, others interpret the words metaphorically, as referring to the tumult raised by Demetrius and his craftsmen, Acts xix. 24.

Isa. xxii. 13.

the life of the world to come, and yet so give themselves to the concerns or the pleasures of this world, as if convinced that men, when they go hence, are no more seen!

33. *Be not deceived ; evil communications corrupt good manners.*

34. *Awake to righteousness, and sin⁷ not ; for some have not the knowledge of God : I speak this to your shame.*

To deny the resurrection, was to be without the true and proper *knowledge of God*. The *evil communications*, the dangerous reasonings of those who would *corrupt the good manners* of the Christians, by undermining the faith which alone can lead to a holy method of living, proceeded on this want of knowledge. And it was to the *shame* of those who had been better taught, that such evil communications were made or listened to.

To doubt that God could raise the body, was to be *without the knowledge* of his *POWER*. The Lord God had formed man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life : and man became a living soul.⁸ The Lord also ordained that man, when his breath was taken away, should return to his dust again. But could not the same almighty hand which had formed man originally, and so curiously fashioned him, clothe his soul again with a body, which should be to him as his own body? “Why should it be thought a thing incredible” with any “that God should raise the dead?”⁹ He, who had once spoken the word, and the world was made;

⁷ ἀμαρτανεῖ. It may signify *error*, as well as *sin*.

⁸ Gen. ii, 7.

⁹ Acts xxvi. 8.

who had commanded, and it was created? “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Then, further, to deny that God would raise the dead, was to be *without knowledge* of his GOODNESS. His goodness would not allow those who have loved and served him, to spend their lives in a vain expectation of a recompense which is to fail them after all. “Ye are they, said our Lord, who have continued with me in my temptations ;”¹ who have left all, to follow me; who have “forsaken houses, and brethren, and sisters, and father, and wife, and children, and lands,” for my sake and the gospel’s. Yet *what advantageth it them, if the dead rise not?*

From the day of Pentecost until the present hour, there has always been a class,—sometimes larger sometimes smaller in the world,—still there has been a class of persons wherever the gospel has been made known, who, instead of seeking their portion in this world, have “sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;” have “set their affections on things above;” and “walked, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Like Paul himself, they have always risked, and sometimes endured, “the loss of all things,” rather than forfeit the favour of God. If they have not been able to say like the apostle, in the literal sense, *I die daily*; in another sense they have been “dead,” and their life has been “hid with Christ in God,” whilst they have “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” If they have not *fought with beasts at Ephesus*, they have contended against Satan, and resisted their own evil passions.

¹ Luke xxii. 28.

² Matt. xix. 28.

They have not made it the business of their lives “to eat and drink,” and take their ease, as those who look for nothing beyond: but knowing that “the fashion of this world passeth away,” they have “wept as those who wept not, rejoiced as those who rejoiced not, used the world as not abusing it.”

And this, not of themselves, not by any natural power or will, but by the grace of God that is with them. They could not have been thus led, to overcome the inclination of their nature, and the temptations which surround them, unless they were “drawn of God:” unless they were filled by his Spirit, making them “new creatures,” who “seek the things which are above,” and whose conversation is not on earth, but in heaven.

Yet to what purpose, *if the dead rise not at all?* Is it consistent with the wisdom of God, to put into men’s hearts this love of him, this desire of his glory, which love is never to be satisfied, which glory is never to be enjoyed?

Therefore, *be not deceived.* To doubt the resurrection of the dead, would be to *have no knowledge of God:* and might justly be *spoken to the shame* of men to whom his word has been revealed: assuring them, that “Verily there is a reward for the righteous, doubtless there is a God which judgeth the earth.”³

³ Ps. lviii. 11.

LECTURE XCI.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE RESURRECTION
ANSWERED.

1 COR. xv. 35—49.

35. *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up ? and with what body do they come ?*

36. *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.*

37. *And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain :*

38. *But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.*

Men who scoffed at the doctrine of the resurrection, would be sure to ask, *How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come ?* How is the form to be again put together, which has been once dissolved ? Or the body which has crumbled into dust, to recover its shape and substance ? This might easily be made to seem incredible. Yet the apostle reminds us, that great changes are constantly passing before our eyes, which may justly teach us to be careful in pronouncing that impossible which appears improbable. We sow a seed in the ground. The seed soon ceases to be a seed : it *dies*, its substance is destroyed, that it may be *quickened* into a new substance : and that which springs up from it, is different from that body which was sown, though

still the same. The oak—how unlike the acorn! And yet the acorn which was sown, is now the oak which spreads its branches far and wide. The grain dropped by the husbandman is not *that body which shall be*: it is very unlike the blade of wheat: and yet the green and growing blade was once the lifeless shrivelled seed. And this, through the power of God. *He giveth the body, as it pleased him*, when he said, (Gen. i. 11,) “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth.” Thus God has ordered, that every seed shall have a body belonging to it, and *every seed his own body*, suited to the purpose it is to answer, and the element in which it is to dwell. For in this respect also there is a great difference among the beings with which the world is peopled.

39. *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.*

40. *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.*

41. *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.*

42. *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:*

43. *It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:*

44. *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

Here again our thoughts are led to contemplate

the resurrection, by reflecting on the mighty and various works of God. He has suited one class of beings to the water, and another to the air, and another to the earth: and some to both. He has placed some bodies in the heavens above, and others on the earth below: and these differ from each other in greatness and splendour. Even of those things which are most splendid, all are not the same; the sun is brighter than the moon, and the moon than the stars; and all the stars are not alike in glory.

So it is with respect to the resurrection of the body. It will be effected by the power of God, of which these instances may give us some conception. It depends on him, whether things shall be mean or glorious. The body, like the seed, *is sown* in the ground: and it is sown in *dishonour, weakness, and corruption*. Nothing can have less of majesty about it, than the corpse which is returned to the earth from whence it came. But what should prevent God from raising that up in power, and beauty, and incorruption, which had been buried in weakness and deformity? Is this too much for him who is “before all things, and by whom all things consist?” Cannot he who made the animal or *natural body*, suited to its abode and functions here on earth, raise up also in its stead a *spiritual body*, suited to another sphere, a different state of being? To doubt or deny this, is to “err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God.”¹ “The Lord Jesus Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.”²

¹ Matt. xxii. 29.

² Phil. iii. 21.

And this is another point in which he resembles our first earthly parent, Adam.

45. *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul ;³ the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

46. *Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterward that which is spiritual.*

47. *The first man is of the earth, earthly : the second man is the Lord from heaven.*

48. *As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly : and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.*

49. *And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

As it is written, as we know from Scripture, that the first man Adam was made a living soul, and so became the father of all mankind, who bear “his likeness,”⁴ are frail, corrupt, and mortal as he became : so likewise the second or last Adam was a quickening spirit, able to revive the natural body, and transform it into a spiritual body. “For as the Father hath life in himself,” and breathed into the first Adam “a living soul ;” so also “hath the Son life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will.”⁵

And according to the author of the work, so is the work that is produced. The body derived from Adam was of the earth, earthly ; the second man is the Lord from heaven ; and the body which he will raise, will be spiritual, heavenly. Now indeed we partake of the nature of the element from which we were formed : we bear the image of the earthly. Very different is the prospect offered to those who shall be “accounted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection of

³ Gen. ii. 7.

⁴ Gen. v. 3.

⁵ John v. 21.

the dead." They "are as the angels of God in heaven."⁶ "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more :" "the sun shall not scorch them by day, neither the moon by night :" "neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things shall have passed away."⁷

Only one conclusion can follow these reflections ; Seeing that we look for these things, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"⁸ The body which is to be raised up "in glory and honour and immortality," must have been kept under subjection to the will of God. For "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."⁹ Even here, there is a *natural body*, and there is a *spiritual body*. There is an indulgence of the animal appetites, which defiles a man ; and there is a restraint and a self-command, which dignifies and exalts a man. And they who aspire to be clothed hereafter with that body which is heavenly, spiritual, and incorruptible, must have also put on that "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness :"¹ must bear, even on earth, the image of him who hath called us to "be holy as he is holy," and to "purify ourselves even as he is pure."

⁶ Matt. xxii. 30.

⁷ Rev. vii. 16 ; xxi. 4.

⁸ 2 Pet. iii. 12.

⁹ Rom. viii. 13.

¹ Eph. iv. 24.

LECTURE XCII.

VICTORY OVER DEATH THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

1 COR. xv. 50—58.

50. *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

51. *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*

52. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,*

53. *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54. *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

Those persons who disputed the doctrine of the resurrection, took their arguments from the nature of the human body. St. Paul shows that the *body which shall be*, will be very different from the body which dies; the body with which men are raised will not have the same properties as that with which the soul has been clothed on earth. Our mortal bodies and an everlasting state cannot agree together. Where there is *flesh and blood*, there must be imperfection and decay.

This, therefore, is the mystery which has been revealed. The same voice, which at the beginning called order out of chaos, and said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" the same almighty power shall give the word, which "all that are in the graves shall hear, and shall come forth." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ"¹ "shall stand before the Son of man," in such a body as the Lord giveth; a body *changed* from mortality to immortality, from corruption to incorruption. And so the prophet's words shall be explained and fulfilled: *Death is swallowed up in victory.*²

55. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

56. *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

57. *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The saying, *Death is swallowed up in victory*, does not come to pass, merely because Christ, being raised from the dead, has given a pledge and proof that *we shall not all sleep in the grave*. *The sting of death* is not in death itself, but in what will follow death; in the judgment which awaits the soul. And that which gives power to this the real sting of death, *is sin*: the fact of which we are conscious, that God, before whom we are to appear, has not been honoured as a Creator, served as a Master, loved as a Father, or obeyed as a King.

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

² Isa. xxv. 8.

And yet he ought to have been so loved and served. To the Gentiles, God “left not himself without witness;” he had “shown unto them that which might be known of him, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”³ To the Jews he had made himself most clearly manifest, though they had not “liked to retain him in their knowledge,” and had made his commandment “of none effect through their traditions.”

Therefore there was *a law*, “holy, just, and good,” a law which ought to have been followed, and had been disobeyed: and because of this disobedience, mankind, “through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.”⁴ By this law the best of men could not abide a trial. “For what man is there who liveth and sinneth not?” And if the righteous, the comparatively righteous, could not be uncondemned, if God were to enter into judgment with them, “Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?”⁵

So that *the strength of sin is the law*. The law gives sin a power to distress the conscience, and sharpens the *sting of death*: tends to make death terrible, not so much to the hardened and ignorant, whose conscience is “seared as it were with a hot iron;” as to the meek and contrite spirit, which trembles at God’s word, and exclaims, “O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and am no more seen.”⁶

But “the Scripture has concluded all under sin,”

³ Rom. i. 19.

⁴ Heb. ii. 15.

⁵ See 1 Pet. iv. 18.

⁶ Ps. xxxix. 13.

not to destroy, but to save : not to point as it were afresh the sting of death, but to take its power away. *The sting of death is sin.* And Christ “ has borne our sins in his own body.” He is “ the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” *The strength of sin is the law.* And Christ has satisfied the law, so that by his “ obedience,” they that believe in him are accounted righteous.⁷ “ There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” They are indeed aware, that “ by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before God.”⁸ But they do not rest on it as the ground of their hope ; they look for “ eternal life, as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ ;”⁹ and in this hope, they have the victory over sin, and over the law, and over death : and are able to say, with humble confidence, “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”¹

58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Though eternal life is to the Christian, “ not of debt, but of grace ;” though his prayer is, rather that God should not “ enter into judgment with him,” than that he should receive his due : still his *labour is not in vain in the Lord.* It would be in vain, if those notions concerning the resurrection, which Paul has been confuting, had been true ; *if the dead*

⁷ Rom. v. 19.

⁸ Rom. iii. 20.

⁹ Rom. vi. 23.

¹ Luke ii. 30.

rise not, there would be no encouragement to be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*: if the slothful servant, and the faithful servant, were to come to a like end, none would be induced “by patient continuance in well-doing to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.” But it is not so. “God is not unrighteous to forget the works and labours of love, which have been shown toward his name:”² and whilst the unprofitable servant shall be cast into outer darkness, he that has been “faithful over a few things,” in discharging his stewardship on earth, shall be made “ruler over many things,” when he “enters into the joy of his Lord.”³ For the same Spirit, which declares that “by grace we are saved, not of works, that any man should boast:”⁴ has also proclaimed, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”⁵

² Heb. vi. 10.

³ Matt. xxv. 21—25.

⁴ Eph. ii. 9.

⁵ Rev. xiv. 13.

LECTURE XCIII.

PAUL'S REASONS FOR REMAINING AT EPHESUS.

1 COR. xvi. 1—9.

1. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.¹
2. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.
3. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.
4. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

These directions take for granted that Christians, every man according to his ability, are to contribute to the relief of their poorer brethren. St. Paul uses no proofs or arguments to enforce the duty; that was not disputed: he only points out the way in which that duty was to be performed. Each was to *lay by in store*, or treasure up, a portion of his means for this object, *according as the Lord had prospered him*. Whatever a man obtains, it is the Lord's giving. Whether the labour of his hands or the labour of his mind has been successful, still it is *as the Lord hath prospered him*; for strength to labour is of the

¹ Probably in his journeys through that country, recorded Acts xvi. 6, and xviii. 23.

Lord, and the success which crowns industry is of the Lord. As David piously acknowledged, concerning the riches which were to be employed on the temple at Jerusalem: “O Lord our God, all this store which we have prepared to build thee a house for thy holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.”²

Therefore they were to dedicate to the people of God a portion of the gain which God had given. But why *on the first day of the week?* The Corinthians, in their heathen state a few years before, had not been accustomed to divide their time by weeks: that division belonged to the Jews alone. And why on *the first*, rather than the last, or any other day? Because a sacred duty was suited to a sacred season: and the Christians, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, now observed *the first day of the week* as the Lord’s day. The heathen converts, who had known no weeks, because they had known no Sabbaths, had learnt to keep that day as “holy of the Lord, and honourable;” and the Jewish brethren, instead of the last day of the week, on which “God rested from the work which he had made,”³ now observed as the sabbath the day on which the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead. Although a day of rest,—that rest from worldly cares which the soul requires,—it was no longer termed the sabbath, but it was “the Lord’s day,”⁴ as the day of the Lord’s resurrection.

The *liberality* here enjoined, was to relieve the straits to which the Christians were reduced at Jerusalem. The bigotry of their countrymen, from

² 1 Chron. xxix. 16.

³ Gen. ii. 2.

⁴ Rev. i. 10.

whom they had separated, subjected them to heavy persecutions. And the poor brethren in Judea, even if they had not been the most oppressed, were the most to be considered; they from whom the blessings were derived which the Christians had inherited; they, the witnesses of God in the world through so many ages,⁵ they “whose were the fathers,” and the prophets; they “from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came,”⁶ to whom the Corinthian congregation “owed even their own-selves.”⁷

5. *Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.*

6. *And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.*

7. *For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.*

8. *But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.*

9. *For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.*

These were Paul's reasons for desiring to remain longer at Ephesus. The opening there for usefulness was clear and wide. It was probably about this time that the truths which the apostle was proclaiming began to work more effectually upon the minds of the Ephesian disciples. There is proof that the Spirit is affecting the heart, (and “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,”) when all earthly things are renounced which are not consistent with the will of God; when a practical conviction lays hold upon the mind, that it profits a

⁵ Isa. xlivi. 10.

⁶ Rom. ix. 5.

⁷ See Philem. 19.

man nothing to “gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.” Now we read in the Acts that this did take place at Ephesus.⁸ “Many that believed, came and confessed and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

This proved that *a great and effectual door was opened* to the apostle. There were many asking, “What must I do to be saved?” And when they had received for answer, that “if they would enter into life, they must keep the commandments;” “cease to do evil, and learn to do well;” for that if they continued in sin, Christ could profit them nothing, they could have no part in his covenant: they did not “go away sorrowing,”⁹ like the young ruler in the Gospel narrative, who would not forego this world’s good for the sake of treasure in heaven: but they publicly renounced the sins which they had hitherto practised secretly, and determined to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

This was not the moment for St. Paul to quit Ephesus. The enemy was retreating, the people of God were “advancing towards Zion with their faces thitherward;”¹ and what could he do but lead them on in the name of God, till the victory was completely gained.

But, besides, *there were many adversaries*. Adversaries of religion will commonly be numerous and vehement in proportion to the prevalence of religion.

⁸ Acts xix. 18—21.

⁹ Matt. xix. 22.

¹ Jer. l. 5.

The malice of Satan waxes hot, when “ he knows that he hath but a short time.”² It was the success of the Gospel, wherever the Lord opened many hearts that they should attend unto the things spoken, which excited the jealousy of the Jews. “ When they saw the multitudes who came together to hear the word of God, then they were filled with envy, contradicting and blaspheming.”³ Perhaps it was about this season when the anger of Demetrius began to show itself, on account of the spread of Christian faith; when he called together the workmen of the like occupation, and said,⁴ “ Sirs, ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands.” This ended at last in Paul’s departure from the city. But before the tumult broke out into actual violence, no doubt there was much secret opposition. So that the opening of *a great and effectual door* was in fact the excitement of violent hostility: and Paul would desire, before he left his new converts, to have larger opportunity of confirming them in the faith, and exhorting them, “ with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord:” for that “ he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Every individual heart must expect to encounter opposition. “ We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” But these things should not move us. It is the heart which he cannot retain that Satan desires to assail, and, if possible, to

² Rev. xii. 12.

³ Acts xiii. 45.

⁴ Acts xix. 18—21.

draw back to himself: but greater is he that is for us, than he that is against us; he “is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”⁵

LECTURE XCIV.

TIMOTHEUS AND STEPHANAS COMMENDED. LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST ENJOINED.

1 Cor. xvi. 10—24.

10. *Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.*

11. *Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.*

Paul intended, as he had before written, to visit Corinth again in person. He “was pressed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Arabia, to go up to Jerusalem.”¹ But meanwhile, finding reason to delay longer at Ephesus, “he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus.” From Philippi and Thessalonica, in Macedonia, these were likely to proceed to Corinth, as Paul himself had done when he laid the foundation of those churches.² Therefore he

⁵ Jude 24.

¹ Acts xix. 21.

² See Acts xvi. 12; xvii. 1; xviii. 1.

prepares the Corinthians to receive Timotheus, “his own son in the faith,” with the respect which he deserved. *Let no man despise him.* The Corinthians were self-sufficient, and Timotheus young : they might be disposed to undervalue him. Paul gives him the highest recommendation, when he says, *He worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.* We are engaged in the same service ; and “I have no man like-minded : for as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel.”³

12. *As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren : but his will was not at all to come at this time ; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.*

13. *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*

14. *Let all your things be done with charity.*

15. *I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) (*

16. *That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.*

17. *I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus : for that which was lacked on your part they have supplied.*

18. *For they have refreshed my spirit and yours : therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.*

There were many ways in which the apostles were aided in the affairs of the early churches ; and we find St. Paul constantly commanding those who were his fellow helpers, and “laboured in the Lord” with him. Stephanas and his household were of this

³ Phil. ii. 22.

class. They had been among the first converts to the faith at Corinth, (*the firstfruits of Achaia,*) and they had been baptized by the apostle in person, contrary to his usual custom.⁴ And now, leaving their former worldly pursuits, they had *addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*: had devoted themselves to the service of the Christians and their cause. He describes such persons elsewhere: “they brought up children, lodged strangers, washed the saints’ feet, relieved the afflicted, and diligently followed every good work.”⁵ Paul commends them to the respect of the Corinthians. *I beseech you, brethren, that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.* Without their assistance the church must languish, and they who had the spiritual charge be overburthened. Now, too, they had visited the apostle at Ephesus, and had *refreshed his spirit*,⁶ and so enabled him to encourage the Corinthians with his exhortation, that *they stand fast in the faith, quit themselves like men, be strong*: and above all, cherish that excellent gift of charity, “the very bond of peace and of all virtue.” *Let all your things be done with charity.*

19. *The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*⁷

⁴ Ch. i. 15—17.

⁵ 1 Tim. v. 10.

⁶ *They have refreshed my spirit and yours: my spirit, by what they have related concerning you: your spirit, by what they have enabled me to write to you in return. Thus giving me information of your state, they have supplied what was lacking on your part: το νόστημα νύμων.*

⁷ The assembly of Christians meeting there.

20. *All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*
21. *The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.⁸*
22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha.⁹*
23. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*
24. *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

To love the Lord Jesus Christ, must be the character of all who are partakers of the covenant of the Gospel. “To them that believe, He is precious.”¹ For how can they to whom he is not precious, be imbued with a sense of the benefits which he offers?

Therefore the apostle gives a sort of general rule, by which they might judge concerning those who were rightly numbered among the brethren. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, cut off from the communion of the saints: let him be Maranatha:* let him expect that the Lord cometh to execute vengeance upon all such as do not “love his appearing.”

It was especially needful to dwell on the love which Christians owe to their Redeemer, in a church where evils existed like those which the apostle had been rebuking in this letter.

Such love would be the best cure for divisions, and the disputes and jealousies which provoked them.

⁸ “Which is the token in every epistle,” that it is genuine: so he writes to the Thessalonians, iii. 17. See also Col. iv. 18. Gal vi. 11.

⁹ Anathema, separated from the church, as an accursed or devoted thing. See Rom. ix. 3. Maranatha, a Syriac expression, signifying, Our Lord cometh; meaning, to execute judgment upon such.

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 7.

When love of the Lord Jesus Christ predominates, individual feelings yield and give way; as disputes in a family are often prevented, by the affection felt by all in common towards a venerable parent. Let that love then be shed abroad in the heart, and one would not be upholding Paul, and one Apollos, and another Cephas;² but Christ would be “all in all.”

Another evil which the apostle had occasion to correct, was connivance at a sinful state of life in some of the members of the church.³ *Love of the Lord Jesus* was the sure remedy of such disorders. Could they who had been “baptized into his death,”⁴ and whom he had “purchased with his own blood,”⁵ could they “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?”⁶

Another prevailing fault was a too near approach to the idolatrous practices of the heathen by whom they were surrounded.⁷ Was this consistent with *love of the Lord Jesus*, who had given himself for them, “the just for the unjust,” that he might redeem them from “these vanities, to serve the living and true God?”⁸ What concord should there be between the children of Christ and of Belial?⁹

Others had admitted unworthy practices into the observance of the Lord’s Supper.¹ But they who truly *loved the Lord Jesus Christ*, would be too deeply impressed with a sense of his mercy not to “discern

² Ch. i. 12.

³ Ch. v. 1—8; vi. 15—20.

⁴ Rom. vi. 3.

⁵ Acts xx. 28.

⁶ Heb. vi. 6.

⁶ Ch. x. 1—22.

⁸ 1 Thess. i. 10.

⁹ 2 Cor. vi. 15.

¹ Ch. xi. 18—34.

the Lord's body,"² pierced and bruised for them, whenever they ate of that bread, and drank of that cup, which was to preserve the remembrance of him, to "shew forth his death till he come."³

Therefore, if the love of the Lord Jesus Christ were in them, *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ* would be with them. But if that love were wanting in any who professed his faith, and bore his name, *let him be Maranatha*; he might look with awe and contrition to the time, when hereafter he should "see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."⁴ That appearance which will be joy to the sincere believer, will be terror to the unworthy professor. For behold, he cometh, "to give to every man according as his work shall be."⁵ And blessed are they who can say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

² xi. 29.

³ xi. 26.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 64.

⁵ Rex. xxii. 12—20.

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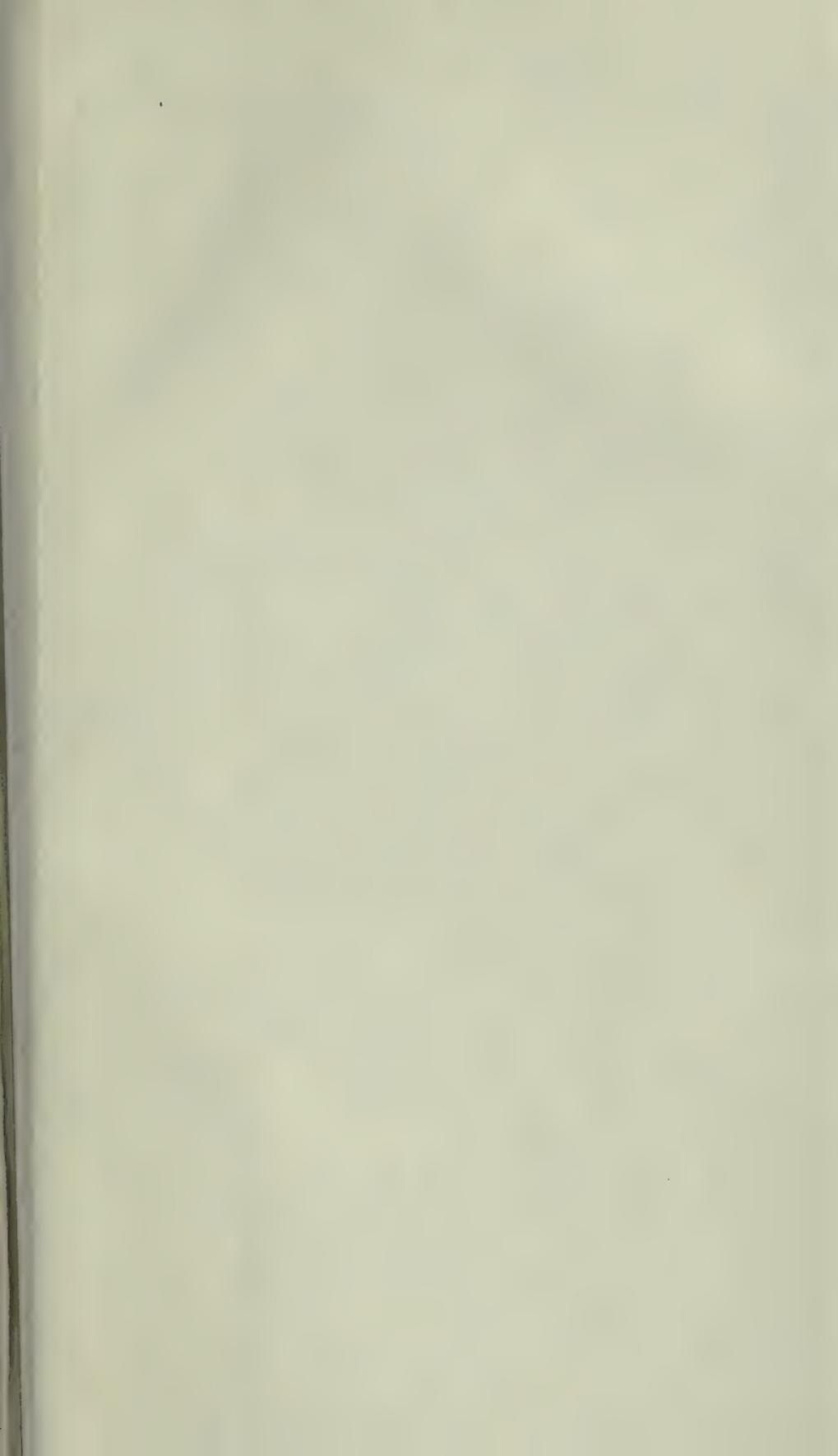
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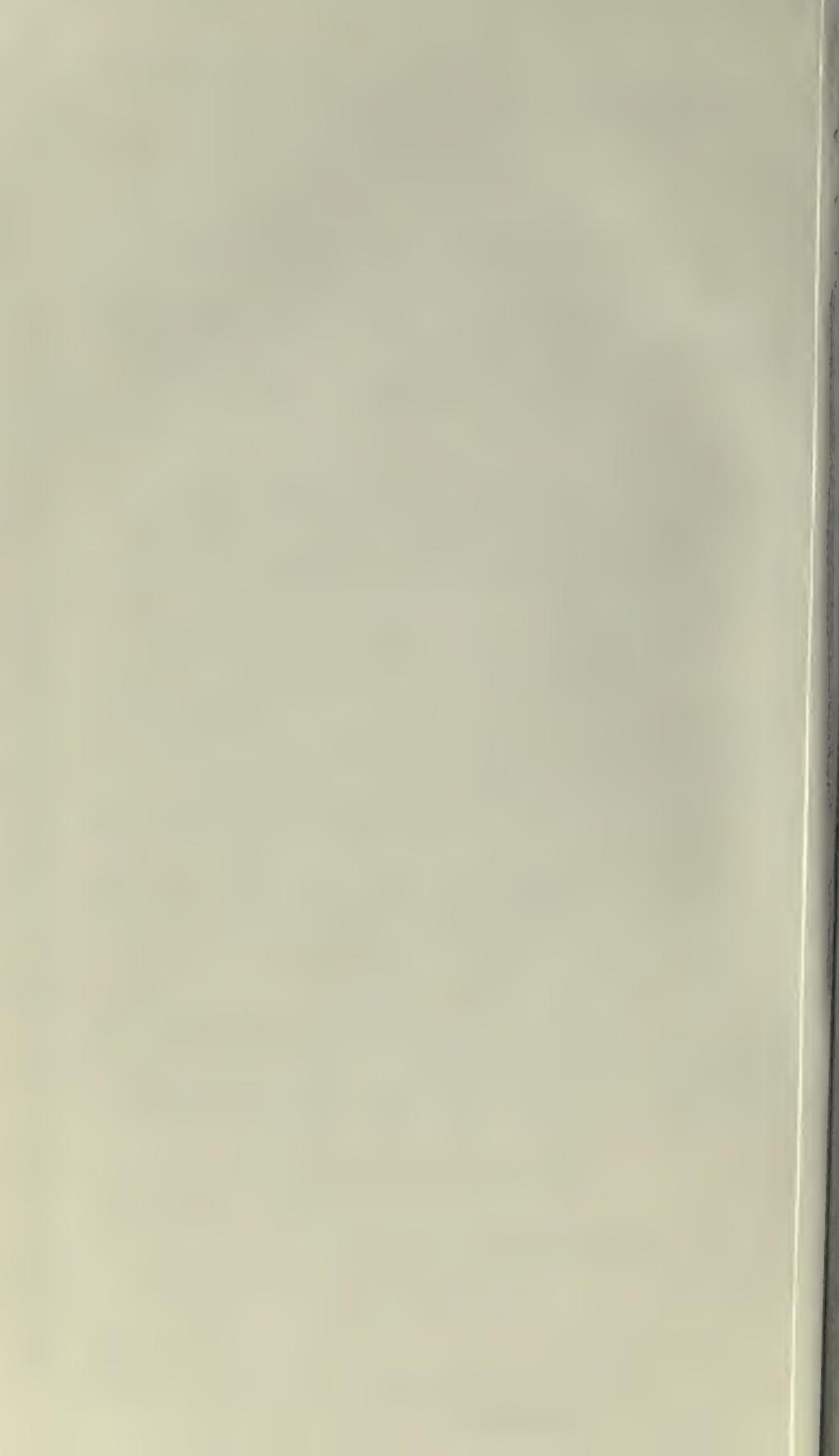
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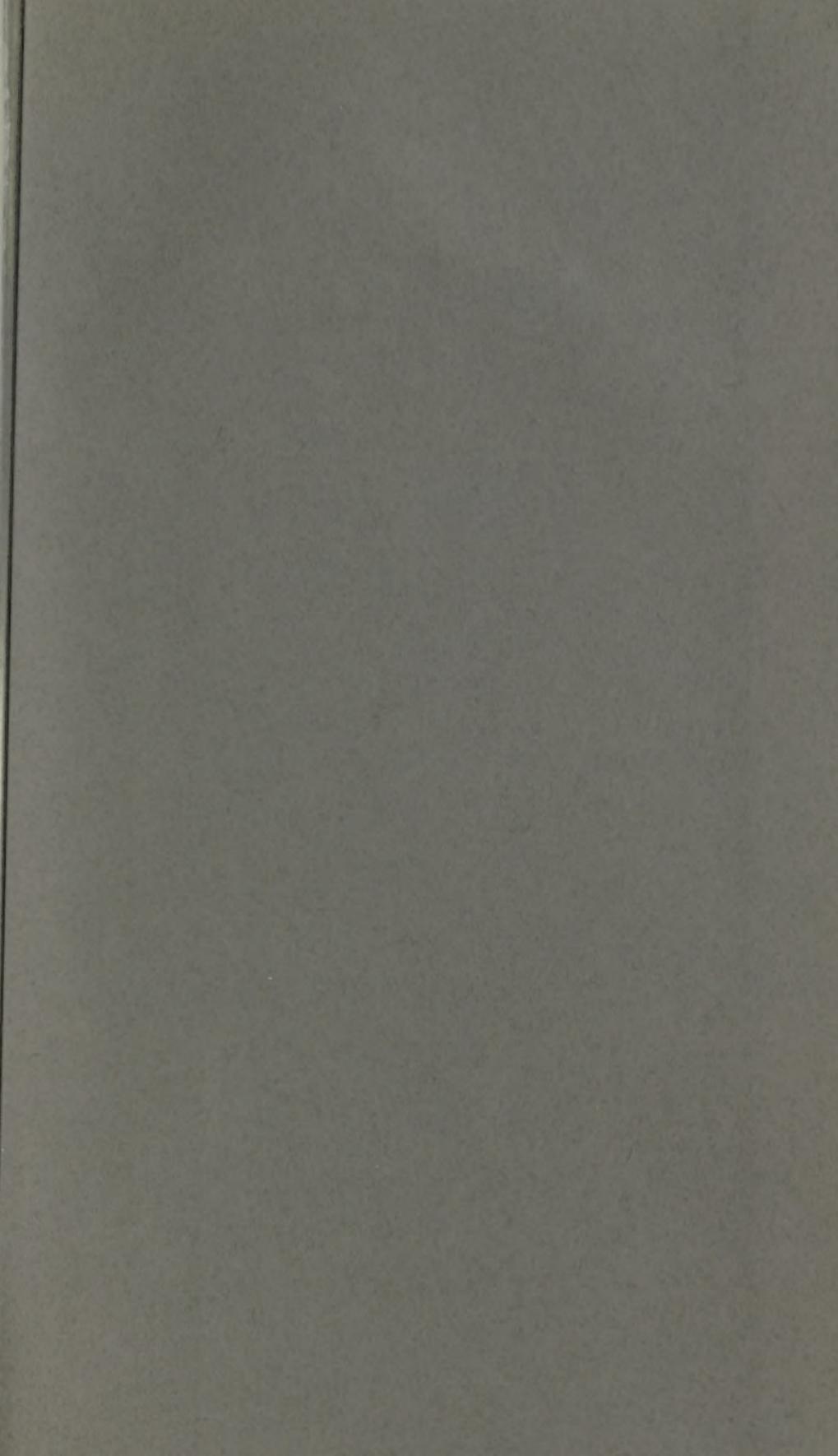
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